Pickwick

A Play
Freely based upon
"The Pickwick Papers"
By
Charles Dickens

Hamilton, Cosmo & Reilly, Frank C.

"Pickwick" (A Play)

Call No. [redacted]

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By COSMO HAMILTON

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HIS MAJESTY THE KING
JOAN AND THE BABIES AND I
PARADISE
SCANDAL
THE BLINDNESS OF VIRTUE
THE BLUE ROOM
THE DOOR THAT HAS NO KEY
THE INFINITE CAPACITY
THE MIRACLE OF LOVE
THE OUTPOST OF ETERNITY
THE PRINCESS OF NEW YORK
THE RUSTLE OF SILK
THE SINS OF THE CHILDREN
THE WISDOM OF FOLLY
UNWRITTEN HISTORY
CASTE
"PICKWICK"—A PLAY
(In collaboration with Frank C. Reilly)

SAMUEL PICKWICK, ESQ., P.C.

"PICKWICK"

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY
COSMO HAMILTON
AND
FRANK C. REILLY

Freely based upon *The Pickwick Papers*
by
CHARLES DICKENS

Time—1827-28 *Place—England*

4403

WITHDRAWN

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1927

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Cosmo Hamilton

Made in the United States of America

First produced at Washington, D.C., 15th February, 1927,
by Frank C. Reilly

"PICKWICK"

A Comedy in Three Acts

By COSMO HAMILTON and FRANK C. REILLY

Freely Based Upon

"THE PICKWICK PAPERS"

by

CHARLES DICKENS

DIRECTED BY CAMPBELL GULLAN

CHARACTERS

(IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE)

Sam Weller	*Charles McNaughton*
Housekeeper	*Ruby Hallier*
Betsy	*Alice Southern*
Nathaniel Winkle, Esq	*Ralph Bunker*
Augustus Snodgrass, Esq	*MacKenzie Ward*
Tracy Tupman, Esq	*Harry Plimmer*
Waiter	*Marshall Hale*
Miss Emily Wardle	*Doreen Wyckoff*
Mr. Bob Sawyer	*Basil Hanbury*
Miss Arabella Allen	*Sheelagh Hayes*
Mr. Ben Allen	*Guido Alexander*
Miss Isabella Wardle	*Jill Willis*
Mr. Trundle	*Malcolm Duffield*
Mr. Wardle	*Galwey Herbert*
Tony Weller	*Bruce Winston*
Miss Rachael Wardle	*Olga Katzin*
Mr. Perker	*George Mack*
Mary	*Marie Paxton*
Joe, The Fatboy	*Maxime Pomada*
Cabman	*Paul Porter*
Samuel Pickwick, Esq	*John Cumberland*
The 'ead 'ostler at the White Hart	*John Rogers*
Stable-Boy	*Tom McKay*
Mr. Alfred Jingle	*Hugh Miller*

The Elderly Gallant	*Claude Gouraud*
Link-Boy	*Sol Solomon*
The Lady in the Sedan Chair	*Maureen Dillon*
Chairbearers	*Arthur Frost* *William Harris*
Mrs. Martha Bardell	*Katherine Stewart*
Master Tommy Bardell	*Frank Peters*
Martin, The Gamekeeper	*Claude Gouraud*
Gamekeeper's Boy	*Maureen Dillon*
Butler	*Frank Andrews*
First Housemaid	*Alice Southern*
Old Mrs. Wardle	*Emily Lorraine*
Jackson	*Basil Hanbury*
Mrs. Cluppins	*Ruby Hallier*
Mrs. Sanders	*Emily Lorraine*
Mr. Dodson	*John Rogers*
Sergeant Buzfuz	*Bruce Winston*
Mr. Skimpin	*Edward Jephson*
Sergeant Snubbin	*Frank Andrews*
Mr. Phunky	*Marshall Hale*
The Gentleman in Black	*Basil Hanbury*
Clerk of the Court	*Claude Gouraud*
First Usher	*Guido Alexander*
Second Usher	*Malcolm Duffield*
Mr. Justice Stareleigh	*Sol Solomon*
A Poor Debtor	*George Spelvin*
His Grand-daughter	*Maureen Dillon*
Roker, the Turnkey	*Tracy Barrow*

INN SERVANTS, STABLE-BOYS, TRAVELLERS, MUSICIANS, VILLAGERS, ETC.

Settings Designed by Junian Boone Fleming and Van Nest Polglase
Settings Painted by William Castle
Scenery Constructed by Frank Dwyer, Inc.
Costumes Executed by Brooks Costume Company
Incidental Music and Lyrics Composed by Bernard Hamblen
Posters by Bradshaw Crandell
Photography by The New York Times Studios
Musical Director—Ross Mobley

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I. Courtyard of the White Hart Inn, London.
(May, 1827.)

Act II. Scene 1. Mr. Pickwick's sitting room in Goswell Street.
(Two days later.)

Scene 2. Shooting party at Dingley Dell.
(An afternoon in December of the same year.)

Scene 3. Manor Farm, Dingley Dell.
(Christmas Eve.)

Act III. Scene 1. Mr. Pickwick's sitting room in Goswell Street.
(A few weeks later.)

Scene 2. A Courtroom in Guildhall.
(The next day.)

Scene 3. Fleet Prison, London.
(Several months later.)

Scene 4. Manor Farm, Dingley Dell.
(Some days later.)

TIME—1827–28. PLACE—ENGLAND

ILLUSTRATIONS

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"PICKWICK"

"PICKWICK"

Act I.

Time—late afternoon in October. Scene —Courtyard of the White Hart Inn, London.

Note: Before the rise of the curtain on this set, the theatre curtains are drawn up to show a drop-cloth on which is painted, with the most absolute fidelity, the exterior of the White Hart framed as though it were a huge enlargement of an old print. This remains in the view of the audience while the orchestra, typical of those times, plays a selection of the comic songs of the period.

Music for the Overture.

We met, 'twas in a crowd.
What though I am a country lass.
Sally in our alley.
O dear, what can the matter be?
Good morrow, Gossip John.
Tippitiwitchit.
Hot Codlings.
Nelly Bly.
Cheer, Boys, Cheer.
The two Obadiahs.
She does the fandango all over the place.
Please sell no more drink to my father!
Dear old pals.

On rise of curtain there is disclosed the charming old courtyard of the White Hart. It is Elizabethan in architecture and is full of colour and warmth. Across the rear, along the entire right side of the stage, one sees the gallery with its many doors and passages. On the third side there is a high arch leading to the stables and coachyard.

At rear centre there is an arched passage about 8 ft. wide and extending to the height of the gallery which leads to the street, and frames a delightful glimpse of the street itself, with its cobblestones, a lamp post, and a row of small shops on the opposite side.

In the rear right corner there is an open stairway which leads up to the gallery.

To the left of the arched passage at rear there is a large casement window and next to it a door which opens into the coffee-room. To the right of this passage is a door which leads to the commercial room.

On the right side centre there is an arch about 4 ft. wide which leads into a corridor. There is a door on either side of this arch.

In the middle of the gallery there are mullioned windows flanked on each side by large double doors. Here there is a room in which balls and meetings are held. Along the gallery right there are 3 doors opening into bedrooms.

Under the gallery to right and left of the arched passage at rear centre there are small tables with benches at which the customers may sit and drink their ale.

Over the door leading to the commercial

room there is a row of bells with numbers corresponding to the bedrooms along the gallery.

The court or yard is paved with uneven stones between which, here and there, there are bits of moss and grass. Otherwise they are scrupulously clean.

At the rise of curtain Sam Weller is discovered sitting on the steps up R. brushing a top boot and singing a song. He is habited in a coarse striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves and blue buttons; drab breeches and leggings. A bright red handkerchief is wound in a very loose and unstudied style round his neck and an old white hat is carelessly thrown on one side of his head. There are two rows of boots before him, one clean and the other dirty, and at every addition to the clean row he pauses from his work and contemplates his results with evident satisfaction.

He sings. Oh, my Love's dead.

As I vas 'valkin' along the sea shore
Vere the loud vistling vinds and vater do roar,
Vith the sky for a kivering, the sand for the ground
I heard a loud woice making sorrowful sound—

Cryin' Oh, my love's dead whom I adore
So I never shall see my true Lover no more.

She'd a woice like a sy-ringe and hair like a dove,
And the song vot she sang vas consarnin' o' love,
She vas fairest o' creeters that ever vas seen
Her shoes vas vite satin, her bonnet pea green.

Cryin' Oh, my love's dead whom I adore
So I never shall see my true Lover no more.

At one of the small tables under the gallery left several stable boys are seated drinking from their pots of ale and bursting into guffaws from time to time to the ribald jokes of the talkative member of the party.

At the moment when Sam Weller has finished his song, there enters a bustling, buxom, red-faced woman,—the housekeeper, —from the arched corridor at right, holding a large bowl in her hands. As she crosses left she calls "Puss, puss, puss," whereupon four or five cats of varying size and colour suddenly appear from all directions and tag at her heels as she leads the way into the stableyard. A lean, ancient and retired coach dog lumbers out and joins the procession. During this one has heard the music of "Lillibulero" on a barrel organ coming nearer and nearer,—and, at this moment, a picturesque person enters the courtyard from the street with a monkey in gay jacket and breeches and a little hat cocked on the side of his head. They are followed by a crowd of street urchins giving shrill laughs of delight. The monkey, attached to a string, hops across to the group of men who are seated at the tables holding out a small tin cup. One of the wags pours some ale into it which the monkey promptly drinks, bringing forth roars of laughter from the crowd. Others, including Sam Weller, drop pennies into the cup, and the housekeeper,

passing back from the yard, hands a meat pasty to the organ man who, continuing to play his squeaky instrument, smiles, tips his hat and moves on down left disappearing through the arch into the stables followed by the urchins.

One of the bells over the coffee-room jangles. The housekeeper looks up at the number, eyes a door in the gallery and calls.

HOUSEKEEPER.

Betsy, Betsy, number twenty-two.

[*A chambermaid appears in the gallery at right, and taps at one of the doors. She opens it slightly and replies to someone within.*]

BETSY.

Yes, Sir. Very good, Sir.

[*She leans over the balustrade and calls.*]
Sam . . . Sam Weller!

SAM.

Hullo!

BETSY.

Number twenty-two wants 'is boots.

SAM.

Ask number twenty-two whether 'e'll 'ave 'em now or wait till 'e gets 'em.

BETSY.

[*Coaxingly.*]

Come, don't be a fool, Sam; the gentleman wants his boots directly.

SAM.

Vell, you're a nice young ooman for a musical party, you are. Look at these 'ere boots,—elevan pair o' boots; and one shoe as belongs to number six with a wooden leg. An' all 'ollerin to be brushed up afore the ball tonight. 'Oo's number twenty-two,—that's to put all the others out? No, no; reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, ven he tied the men up. Sorry to keep you a'waitin', Sir, but I'll attend to you directly.

BETSY.

[*Urgently.*]

It's the gentleman what come in a hackney coach, wery smart—nosegay in his buttonhole, broadbrimmed tile, black silk weskit. It's *him* as wants his boots and you'd better bring 'em and that's all about it.

SAM.

Vy didn't you say so afore?

[*He singles out the boots before him and starts up the stairs to the gallery.*]

For all I know'd he vas one o' the reg'lar thruppennies. If he's anythin' of a gen'lm'n he's vorth a shilling a day, let alone the arrands.

[*He taps on number twenty-two and drops the boots inside.*]

NATHANIEL WINKLE, ESQ., P.C.

Boots, Sir.

[*As he comes out he holds a shilling in his palm*].

Thankee, Sir, thankee.

[*He closes the door, shoots a grin at Betsy and comes down the stairs.*]

'e *is* a gen'lm'n, Betsy.

[*He spits on the coin, puts it in his pocket and pats the place.*]

And 'e's had a good rest, and arter all, there's nothin, so refreshing as sleep,—as the servant gal said afore she drank the eggful of laudanum.

[*At this moment two gentlemen enter through the archway from the street; the one Mr. Snodgrass, young, poetic, enveloped in a mysterious blue cloak with a canine skin collar; and the other Mr. Winkle, a bit older, sporting, communicating additional lustre to a new green shooting coat, plaid neckerchief and closely fitted drabs.*]

WINKLE.

I have a great affection for this old Inn, my dear Snodgrass. A very pleasant walk. We have time, I think, for a glass of wine before our estimable friend joins us here.

SNODGRASS.

Will you be so good as to ring the bell, my dear Winkle, while I ask a question or two?

[*Mr. Winkle proceeds springily to a small table under the gallery at rear to right, as Mr. Snodgrass, catching sight of Sam Weller calls up to him.*]

SNODGRASS.

Boy, has a gentleman by the name of Mr. Tracy Tupman engaged rooms at this Inn?

SAM.

Yes, Sir. Number twenty-two, Sir; an 'e *is* a gen'lm'n, Sir.

SNODGRASS.

[*Smiling.*]

Tell him that Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass have just arrived.

SAM.

Yes, Sir, wery good, Sir.

[*Mr. Snodgrass joins Mr. Winkle at the table, as Sam starts up the stairs. Before he reaches the door, however, it opens and Mr. Tracy Tupman appears. Time and feeding have expanded his once romantic form; the black silk waistcoat has become more and more developed, inch by inch has the gold watch chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision; gradually has the capacious chin encroached upon the border of the white cravat; but the soul of Tupman has known no change,—admiration of the fair sex is still his ruling passion.*

SAM.

Two gen'lm'n to see you, Sir.

TUPMAN.

[*Feeling his way in gingerly fashion down the stairs.*]

Thank you, Boots, thank you.

SNODGRASS.

[*Coming forward to meet him.*]

Ah, Tupman.

TUPMAN.

[*Waving his hand.*]

Ah, my dear Snodgrass. Ah, my dear Winkle.

[*He puts his arm round Mr. Snodgrass's shoulders and goes up to the table.*]

WINKLE.

You are just in time to join us in a glass of wine.

[*To waiter who has appeared.*]

Waiter, three glasses of sherry with a touch of bitters in each.

TUPMAN.

A great pleasure. I have engaged rooms here for Mr. Pickwick and yourselves, and myself, of course, as I undertook to do. I agree with Mr. Pickwick that there is a greater element of romance and uncertainty in starting off on our adventures from this Inn than from his nice but prosaic lodgings in Goswell Street.

SNODGRASS.

That also is my feeling. Romance! I hope so.

WINKLE.

Sport, at any rate. Always ready for a little bit of sport!

TUPMAN.

[*Sitting as do the others.*]

I take it that the resolutions of the Pickwick Club were passed in proper fashion?

WINKLE.

They were. They were indeed. Everyone was greatly disappointed at your absence from the Meeting.

TUPMAN.

My dear friends, it grieved me more than I can say that I should have been unable to attend. I shall thank you to be good enough to tell me precisely what transpired.

[*The waiter brings the glasses on a tray.*]

SNODGRASS.

I took the precaution to make a copy of the resolutions. Shall I read the one that particularly applies to us?

[*He pulls out a roll of manuscript from his pocket.*]

TUPMAN.

Pray do, my dear young friend. But let me offer my apologies to you, Winkle, for forcing you to hear it for a second time.

WINKLE.

[*Rising to bow.*]

Apologies accepted, Sir.

SNODGRASS.

[*Striking an attitude and reading from his papers.*]

Resolved that Samuel Pickwick, Esquire, Tracy Tupman, Esquire, Nathaniel Winkle, Esquire and Augustus Snodgrass, Esquire, are hereby nominated and appointed members of a new branch of the United Pickwickians, under the title of The Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club. That they are requested to forward from time to time authenticated accounts of their journeys, of their observations of character and manners, together with all their adventures, to the Pickwick Club stationed in London.

TUPMAN.

Profoundly moving and historical!

SNODGRASS.

Following the reading of the resolutions, which I am sure you will prefer to study at your leisure, Mr. Pickwick was presented with a set of notebooks, elaborately marked with P. C.,

in which the members are to inscribe the said authenticated accounts of their perambulations, perils, travels and sporting transactions. He has asked me, gentlemen, to deliver one to each of you.

[*He hands them over with a bow.*]

TUPMAN.

A great day! A great occasion!

WINKLE.

[*Deeply moved.*]

Ah, I wish you could have seen our esteemed and illustrious Mr. Pickwick, my dear Tupman, —his gigantic brain working behind that noble forehead, his beaming eyes twinkling behind those circular spectacles, as he slowly mounted into the Windsor chair on which his person had been previously seated and addressed the Club which he himself had founded.

TUPMAN.

Moving,—most moving. This is indeed a profoundly important day for us all, my friends. We cannot hazard a guess as to what, or where, or among whom, it may lead us, either to happiness, usefulness or pain.

SNODGRASS.

[*Rising and holding his glass aloft.*]

True, true! Gentlemen, I give you a toast. To the United Pickwickians coupled with the name of our beloved leader, which will undoubt-

edly go down to history as a beacon of philosophy and research.

[MR. TUPMAN *and* MR. WINKLE *rise and click glasses with great solemnity.*

There is suddenly heard the sound of a coach horn in the distance off left followed by the clatter of horses' hoofs on cobbles. The housekeeper rushes out from the coffee-room in a great flurry.]

HOUSEKEEPER.

Sam! Betsy! The coach, the coach. Look alive now!

[*The sound of the horn comes nearer. It is playing "A large one for the lady and a little one for the baby." The stable boys leap from their seats and scurry into the coach yard, playing leapfrog as they go. The clatter of hoofs becomes louder and louder as the coach is driven into the yard. Then there is the sound of the application of brakes and a voice saying "Steady, steady now," and the rear end of the coach is backed on left. The two grooms leap down from the back seat and hook on the steps, while Trundle, Sawyer and Allen get down swifty and stand by to help the young ladies. There is much giggling and coyness on the part of the latter as they endeavour to manipulate their hoop skirts. It is an animated scene with laughter and chatter, running stable boys and finally the entrance of Tony Weller with Mr. Wardle.*]

TONY WELLER.

All safe and sound, Mr. Wardle, Sir. A wery good run, say I.

WARDLE.

In every sense of the word, Weller. Glorious day, good horses, beautiful country, pleasant company, the familiar Chatham road, and a very excellent whip. Couldn't have handled the reins better myself.

TONY WELLER.

[*Touching his hat.*]

Thankee kindly, Sir.

[*Mr. Wardle is a stout jovial old gentleman, —not so old, with a blue coat and bright buttons, corduroy breeches and top boots. He walks about with his legs apart, has a habit of smacking everyone on the back, of breaking into loud and hearty guffaws and proves the possession of a very kind heart by a constant beaming smile.*

Miss Rachel Wardle, his sister, a lady of doubtful age, is the last to descend from the coach. The girls have been handed down by this time and are standing in a group with the young gentlemen, arranging their skirts and fussing with their bonnet strings.]

WARDLE.

Now, sister, take the plunge.

TONY WELLER

RACHEL.

[*With an affectation of fright*]

Lor, brother, what a number of steps.

WARDLE.

[*Warningly.*]

Don't take them face forwards. Turn round sailorwise. Never mind what you show.

RACHEL.

Oh lor brother. This is a *very* nervous proceeding. What I *show* indeed! How you talk.

[*During this conversation Sam has mounted the coach and is handing down the luggage to several stable boys.*]

WARDLE.

[*Opening the door of the coach.*]

Now, young gentlemen, conduct the young ladies to the coffee-room and order what you need. Joe, Joe! Damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again. Mary, be good enough to pinch him in the leg; nothing else will wake him.

[*This to a very pretty maid who is sitting inside the coach. She carries out her master's direction. There is a loud scream.*]

Look sharp, Joe, nip out and help with the luggage.

JOE.

[*Sleepily, in a high pitched voice.*]

Yes, Sir.

[*He is an enormously fat boy dressed in garments which emphasize his comic rotundity. He climbs across Mary who tries to make room for him and as he descends from the coach he misses his foot and rolls on the stones like a barrel. Mary follows him out and helps him to his feet.*

During all this Mr. Perker emerges from the coffee-room. He is a little high-dried man, with a dark squeezed-up face and small restless black eyes that keep winking and twinkling on each side of his little inquisitive nose as if they are playing a perpetual game of peep-po with that feature. He is dressed all in black, with boots as shiny as his eyes, a low white neckcloth and a clean shirt with a frill to it. A gold watch chain and seals depend from his fob. He carries his black kid gloves in *his hands not* on *them, and whenever he speaks he thrusts his wrists beneath his coat tails with the air of a man who is in the habit of propounding some regular posers. He comes downstage at this point and addresses Mr. Wardle.*]

PERKER.

Mr. Wardle, your servant, Sir.

WARDLE.

Ah! Perker! Punctual to the moment, then!

How do you find yourself? Pretty perky, Perker?

[*He bursts into a guffaw.*]

PERKER.

Perky is the word, Mr. Wardle.

WARDLE.

Sister, allow me to introduce Mr. Perker, a shining light of the law, without whom I should be lost.

[*Rachel simpers and curtseys.*]

My two gals, Emily and Isabella, and the black-eyed young lady in a very nice little pair of boots with fur round the top,—Miss Arabella Allen.

[*Perker bows deeply and the three girls titter and curtsey all at once.*]

And these three young gentlemen in close attendance,—as close as they can get,—Mr. Trundle, Mr. Sawyer, Mr. Allen.

[*The three young gentlemen bow.*]

PERKER.

And now, Mr. Wardle, pray let me have the pleasure of acting as host in the coffee-room. The negus is excellent.

WARDLE.

[*Smacking him on the back.*]

The pleasure is ours, my friend. Lead the way, young people. Joe, Joe! Damn that boy, asleep again. Joe, Joe, the bags.

[*Joe has seated himself on a piece of luggage and has been fast asleep. He rubs his eyes, yawns and staggers to his feet.*]

JOE.

Yes, Sir.

WARDLE.

[*Taking Perker's arm.*]

Negus will go down well. It's a long drive from Rochester with the air a little sharp.

[*Wardle and Perker go into the coffee-room. Miss Rachel hangs behind, and darts a look at Tupman, who comes forward eagerly but with a slight timidity.*]

TUPMAN.

[*Bowing low.*]

Dare I venture . . .

RACHEL.

Lor, it's Mr. Tupman. What a pleasant surprise!

TUPMAN.

Miss Wardle, I am overpowered at the fact that you remember me . . .

RACHEL.

A woman's memory has fewer items on its shelves than that of a man, they say.

[*She breaks into a torrent of giggles, curtseys and titters across to the coffee-*

room on the tips of her toes,—through the open windows of which the new arrivals can be seen arranging themselves. Mary is collecting the young ladies' hatboxes very attentively aided by Sam, who, it is quite papable, has fallen an instant victim to her charms.]

SAM.

The rooms is all ready for the young ladies, Mary.

MARY.

[*Coquettishly.*]

Lor, ain't *you* the bold one! How did you know me name was Mary?

SAM.

[*With impertinent chivalry.*]

'Cause a bootiful creetur like you is bound to possess me favourite name.

MARY.

[*Giggling.*]

Get along with yer. You *are* the one! We haven't been introduced.

SAM.

Oh jimminy. . . . Well, it's easy to remedy that.

[*He takes off his hat with a sweep.*]

'Ave the wery great pleasure to present that smart, all-round, much required person, as

carries the White 'Art on 'is nimble back, of the name of Samivel Veller.

MARY.

[*Laughing.*]
I said you was the one.

SAM.

The one and only, if I knows anythin'.

MARY.

[*With an elaborate imitation of one of her young ladies.*]
How you are, Mr. Weller?

SAM.

[*Putting on the air of a high nob.*]
How are *you*, Ma'am? Wery glad to see you indeed and hope our acquaintance may be a long 'un, as the gen'l'man said to the fi' Pun note.

MARY.

[*Still pretending.*]
Boots, I think, Mr. Weller?

SAM.

Boots, arrands, and gen'ral responserability and superawision. Wages fair, tips 'andsome.

MARY.

[*Dropping her handbag.*]
Oh, I can't a-bear these bags.

SAM WELLER, MARY, AND THE POST-BOY

SAM.

[*Picking it up.*]
No more you never ought to, neither.

MARY.

Why not?

SAM.

A-carryin' weights and such ought never to be formilier with elegance and wirtue, me dear.

MARY.

Dear? For shame, Mr. Weller!

SAM.

What's a shame?

MARY.

Talking in that way,—so soon.

SAM.

Nonsense. It ain't no 'arm. It's natur.

MARY.

Imperance!

[*She turns away in a pretended huff, goes upstairs to the arched corridor under the gallery, turns, throws Sam a ravishing smile and goes in.*]

SAM.

[*Having gazed after her enraptured.*]

Done for, Sammy!

[*He kisses his hand, heaves a deep sigh and would remain in an attitude of ecstasy but for the fact that the fat boy barges into him.*

SAM.

Vell, young twenty stun! You're a nice specimen of a prize boy, you are.

[*He loads the boy with bags.*]

JOE.

[*Staggering under the weight.*]

Thankee.

SAM.

You ain't got nothing on your mind as makes yer fret yerself, 'ave yer?

JOE.

Not as I knows on.

SAM.

[*Giving him a hearty smack.*]

Vell, come on then, young dropsy.

[*Upon the arrival of the coach the three Pickwickians, who are seated at the table outside the coffee-room, are immediately all attention. Each grasps his notebook in order to jot down his first observations. At*

the descent of the members of the fair sex from the coach their duties as observers of the Corresponding Society are forgotten and they gaze in admiration. As the party approaches the coffee-room EMILY *darts a furtive though coquettish glance at the handsome* SNODGRASS *who is thrown into bewilderment and joy; and* ARABELLA ALLEN *is not unconscious of the adoring gaze cast upon her by the sportive* WINKLE.]

WINKLE.

[*Laughing.*]

Well, Tupman, I hope and trust that you have made complete notes of your first observations.

TUPMAN.

[*A bit self conscious.*]

Gad, Sir, how do you think it is possible for me to write authenticated accounts when you know that my ruling passion is admiration of the fair sex? Then, too, this incident has rather flustered my nerves!

WINKLE.

[*Looking at* SNODGRASS'S *notebook.*]

Ah ha, your page is blank, I see.

SNODGRASS.

[*Gazing abstractedly into space.*]

But not for long. I shall proceed to write a sonnet to that most lovely face!

[*He heaves a sigh and puts his hand on his heart. And as he turns to look at the coffee-room* EMILY WARDLE *appears at the window and catches his eye. She pretends that this is an accident and after looking about as though to admire the yard flashes him a smile that makes him stagger in his boots. She then withdraws triumphant in having done considerable damage.*]

WINKLE.

Gentlemen, I propose a toast to the little beauty with the black eyes and the fur tippets.

[*They drink and seat themselves.*]

TONY WELLER.

[*Entering from the coach yard off left as Sam comes on from corridor right.*]

Vell, Sammy me son, I haven't seen you for two months and better.

SAM.

Nor more you 'ave, old codger. 'Ow are yer, my ancient? And 'ow's mother-in-law?

TONY WELLER.

[*Sitting on trough by pump and speaking with much solemnity.*]

There never were a nicer woman as a vidder as that 'ere second wentur o' mine. A sweet creetur she was, Sammy. All I can say on 'er now, is, that as she was such an uncommon pleasant vidder it's a great pity she ever

changed her condition. She don't act as a vife, Sammy.

SAM.

Don't she, though?

TONY WELLER.

[*Shaking his head and sighing.*]

I've done it once too often, Sammy. I've done it once too often. Take example by your father, me boy, and be wery careful o' vidders all yer life, 'specially if they're Methodistical. She's uncommon pious lately and got some inwention for grown up people being born again, Sammy; the new birth, I think they calls it.

SAM.

The new birth! What's that?

TONY WELLER.

I hain't rightly sure, but I should wery much like to see the system in haction, Sammy. I should wery much like to see your mother-in-law born again. Wouldn't I put her out to nurse.

[*The waiter brings a pot of ale and gives it to* TONY *who blows the froth from the top before he drinks. The waiter returns to the Inn.*]

Let's take this into the stables where we can be with the 'osses.

SAM.

Anything to oblige, old-un.

TONY WELLER.

[*Rising.*]

Sammy, what do you think the old ooman does t'other day?

SAM.

[*Putting his arm round his father's shoulder.*]

Don't know, ancient, wot?

TONY WELLER.

[*Walking towards stables.*]

Goes and gets up a grand tea-drinking for a fellow they call the Shepherd.

[As they go off talking one hears the slow and heavy hoof beats of an approaching horse-drawn vehicle without, and at this moment there appears in the arched passage an ancient cabriolet drawn laboriously by an even more ancient horse. In the little compartment beside the cabman sits the aforementioned esteemed and illustrious Mr. Pickwick, with his beaming eyes twinkling behind his glasses.

The cabman turns the horse towards the left, cries out "Woa, woa," as though he were driving a young and reckless animal. Then calling out "Steady, steady, I tell yer. Woa there, woa," he scrambles off the box and runs round to the animal's head as though he

anticipated a display of obstreperous spirits. Immediately upon the arrival of the cab TUPMAN, WINKLE *and* SNODGRASS *spring to their feet and go forward to welcome* MR. PICKWICK *with a mixture of familiarity, respect, admiration and affection.*]

TUPMAN.

[*Removing his hat with an elaborate wave.*]
The leader of an epoch making movement.

WINKLE.

The immortal Pickwick.

SNODGRASS.

The great philosopher destined to lead his friends into the glories of his discoveries.

PICKWICK.

[*Gravely, doffing his hat; then rising and endeavouring to descend from the cab. His dignity is shaken for the reason that he takes a false step and almost falls to the ground, at which the three men rush towards him with exclamations of warning.* PICKWICK *then turns about and descends backwards and stands beaming at his friends with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails, thus revealing himself in those tights and gaiters which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed them,—if we may use the expression,—inspired involuntary awe and respect.*]

Gentlemen, your servant.

[*He turns to the cabman, rubbing his nose with the shilling which he has reserved for paying his fare.*]

How old is that horse, my friend?

CABMAN.

Forty-two.

PICKWICK.

[*Amazed.*]

What!

[*He takes out his notebook and jots it down, the three Pickwickians do likewise, repeating the words to themselves.*]

CABMAN.

Forty-two.

PICKWICK.

[*Peering into his face which remains immovable.*]

And how long do you keep him out at a time?

CABMAN.

Two or three veeks.

PICKWICK.

Weeks!!

[*He writes this down in his book, as do all the others, repeating the word "Weeks" in various tones of amazement.*]

CABMAN.

He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home but we seldom takes him home on account of his veakness.

PICKWICK.

[*Greatly perplexed.*]

On account of his weakness?

CABMAN.

He always falls down when he's took out of the cab, but when he's in it we bears him up wery tight, and takes him in wery short, so he can't wery well fall down, and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on so ven he *does* move they run arter him and he must go on,—he can't help hisself.

[*Pickwick and his three friends look at each other as though they were indeed making the first of their great discoveries and then all together enter the cabman's words into their little books.*]

PICKWICK.

God bless my soul. . . . Here's your fare.

CABMAN.

[*Taking the shilling, squinting at it with the greatest contempt and throwing it on the ground.*]

A shillin'! When the legal fare's a shillin' and sixpence on the board? You dirty h'informer, I'll fight yer for the diff'rence.

PICKWICK.

[*Completely aghast.*]

Fight!

SNODGRASS.

You're mad.

WINKLE.

Or drunk.

TUPMAN.

Or both.

[*In his agitation Pickwick commences to flick the tails of his coat and for a moment appears to be about to turn on his heels and run. Then he pulls himself together, adopts an attitude of great dignity and stands firm.*]

PICKWICK.

Or overtired, perhaps.

CABMAN.

[*Roaring at the top of his voice and sparring away like clockwork.*]

Come on—all four on yer, dirty h'informers, dirty h'informers.

[*At which several stable boys hurry on from left to see what it's all about.*]

BOY.

What's the row, cabby?

CABMAN.

Row,—what did he want my number for?

[*He jumps from side to side hitting out wildly with his fists.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Astonished.*]

I *didn't* want your number.

CABMAN.

What did yer take it for then?

PICKWICK.

[*Indignantly.*]

I didn't take it.

CABMAN.

[*Appealing to the boys.*]

Would anybody believe as an h'informer 'ud go about in a man's cab not only takin' down his number, but evry word 'e says into the bargain?

BOY.

Did 'e?

CABMAN.

Yes, did 'e; and then arter agrewatin to assault gets three witnesses 'ere to prove it. But *I'll* give it to 'im, if I 'ave six months for it. Come on, all on yer.

[*He dashes his hat to the ground, spits on his hands, knocks* MR. PICKWICK'S *spec-*

tacles off and follows up the attack with a blow on MR. PICKWICK'S *nose and another on* MR. PICKWICK'S *chest and a third in* MR. SNODGRASS'S *eye, and a fourth, by way of variety, in* MR. TUPMAN'S *waistcoat, and, finally, dashes the whole temporary supply of breath out of* MR. WINKLE'S *body,—and all in half a dozen seconds. Chaos reigns.*]

SNODGRASS.

Call a constable.

BOY.

Put 'im under the pump.

PICKWICK.

You shall smart for this.

CROWD.

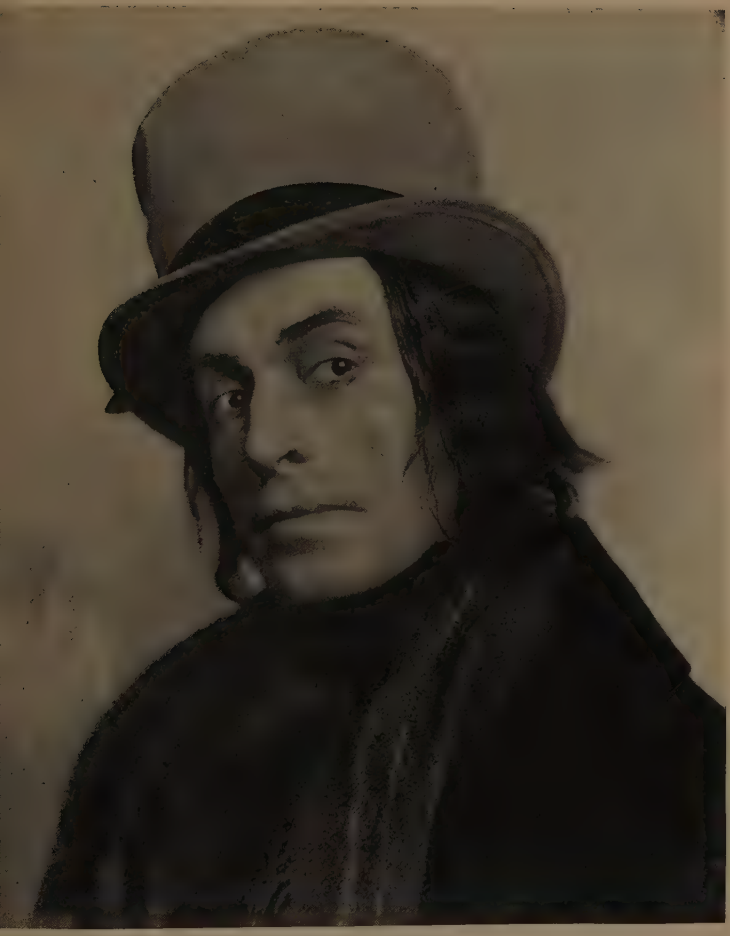
H'informers!

CABMAN.

[*Sparring without cessation.*]

Come on, come on, I tell yer.

[*He is about to go for Pickwick again when a young man enters quickly from the coach-yard. He is about the middle height, but the thinness of his body and the length of his legs give him the appearance of being much taller. The green coat has been a smart dress garment in the days of swallow tails, but has evidently in those times adorned a much shorter man than the stranger, for the soiled and faded sleeves scarcely reach to*



ALFRED JINGLE

his wrists. It is buttoned closely up to his chin at the imminent hazard of splitting the back; and an old stock, without a vestige of shirt collar, ornaments his neck. His scanty black trousers display here and there those shiny patches which bespeak long service, and are strapped very tightly over a pair of patched and mended shoes as if to conceal the dirty white stockings which are, nevertheless, distinctly visible. His long black hair escapes in negligent waves from beneath each side of an old pinched-up hat; and glimpses of his bare wrists may be observed between the tops of his gloves and the cuffs of his coat sleeves. His face is thin and haggard; but an indescribable air of jaunty impudence and perfect self-possession pervades the whole man.]

JINGLE.

[*Planting himself in front of the cabman.*]
What's the fun?

CROWD.

H'informers!

PICKWICK.

[*Roaring indignantly.*]
We are *not.*

JINGLE.

Ain't you though, ain't you?

[*He makes his way through the crowd by the infallible process of elbowing the counte-*

nances of its competent members, SNODGRASS *picks up* PICKWICK'S *spectacles and returns them to him, while* TUPMAN *and* WINKLE *rearrange their clothes. The boys burst out laughing and then in a good-natured way surround the cabman and dodge his violent blows.*

JINGLE.

Here, number nine-two-four, take your fare and take yourself off—respectable gentleman—know him well—none of your nonsense—this way, Sir—these your friends?—all a mistake, I see—never mind—accidents will happen—best regulated families—never say die—down on your luck—pull him up—put that in his pipe—like the flavour—damned rascals.

[*All this he delivers with extraordinary volubility, waving his arms like windmills. The boys dodge and run into the stables playing the fool as they go. The cabman, grumbling to himself and obviously aware of the fact that the new arrival is a better fighter than he is, picks up his shilling and lumbers off with his cab, leading the poor old horse. He turns at the exit and shouts, "H'informers, all on yer. Dirty h'informers. I'll know yer when I see yer."*]

JINGLE.

[*Stamping his foot and waving his hand.*]

Begone. Here, waiter.

[*He snaps his fingers at a waiter who has appeared at the coffee-room door.*]

Glasses round—brandy and water, hot and strong, and sweet, and plenty,—eye damaged, Sir? Waiter; raw beefsteak for the gentleman's eye,—nothing like raw beefsteak for a bruise, Sir: cold lamp post very good, but lamp post inconvenient—damned odd standing in the open street half an hour with your eye against a lamp post, eh,—very good—ha! ha!

[*During the last part of this harangue the waiter has hurried into the coffee-room to carry out his orders.*]

PICKWICK.

[*To* JINGLE, *with great courtesy, sincerity and pomp.*]

Sir, I beg to be allowed, on behalf of myself and my friends, to express my warmest obligation and gratitude for your timely interference. Permit me to introduce myself to you,—Samuel Pickwick, P.C.—G.C.M.P.C. of Hornsey, North London. And these gentlemen are my travelling companions; Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass. Sir, we shall always remember this gallant and tempestuous rescue.

[*The waiter has placed the drinks on one of the tables under the gallery. He remains there ready to place the chairs for the gentlemen.*]

JINGLE.

[*With a broad wave of the hand.*]

Never mind—said enough—no more; smart chap that cabman—handles his fives well; had I been your friend in the green jemmy—damn

me—punch his head—'cod I would—pigs whisper—pieman too, no gammon. Thinking Sir?

PICKWICK.

I am ruminating on the strange mutability of human affairs.

JINGLE.

Philosopher, Sir?

PICKWICK.

An observer of human nature, Sir.

JINGLE.

Ah, so am I. Most people are when they've little to do and less to get.

[*To* SNODGRASS.]

Poet, Sir.

PICKWICK.

My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a strong poetic turn.

JINGLE.

[*Backing all the time towards the drinks.*]

So have I. Epic poem—ten thousand lines—revolution—of July—composed it on the spot—Mars by day, Apollo by night—bang the field piece, twang the lyre.

SNODGRASS.

[*Eagerly.*]

You were present at that glorious scene, Sir?

JINGLE.

[*Filling a glass.*]

Present! Think I was; fired a musket—fired with an idea—rushed into wineshop—wrote it down—back again—whiz-bang—another idea—wineshop again—pen and ink—back again—cut and slash—noble time, Sir.

[*To Winkle.*]

Sportsman, Sir?

[*The others sit at the table,* WINKLE *fills the glasses.*]

WINKLE.

[*Preening.*]

A little, Sir.

JINGLE.

Fine pursuit, Sir, fine pursuit. Dog, Sir?

WINKLE.

Not just now.

JINGLE.

Ah! You should keep dogs—fine animals—sagacious creatures—dog of my own once—Pointer—surprising instinct—out shooting one day—entering enclosure—whistled—dog stopped—whistled again—Ponto—no go; stock still—called him—Ponto, Ponto—wouldn't move—dog transfixed—staring at a board—looked up, saw an inscription—"Gamekeeper has orders to shoot all dogs found in this enclosure"—wouldn't pass it—wonderful dog—valuable dog that—very.

PICKWICK.

[*Whipping out his notebook.*]

Singular circumstance, that. Will you allow me to make a note of it?

JINGLE.

Certainly, Sir, certainly. Hundred more anecdotes of the same animal.

[*A moment or two before this the four ladies of the* WARDLE *party have come into the court yard, and seeing the gentlemen drinking at the table have been thrown into a condition of twittering and preening confusion.* EMILY, *obviously greatly taken by* SNODGRASS, *throws him further killing looks on her way with the two other girls to the arch right.* MISS RACHEL *has caught sight of* JINGLE; *she hesitates, undergoes a series of wriggles and as she passes centre drops her handkerchief. Quick to catch her ogling glances* JINGLE, *springs to his feet, picks up the handkerchief and removing his shabby old hat with a tremendous sweep hands it delicately to the giddy spinster, who curtseys to him.* JINGLE, *about to bow even more profoundly, remembers suddenly the precarious thinness of his trousers and cuts the bow in half, clapping his hand on the spot where they might break. The girls have turned at the archway and one sees* SNODGRASS *receiving* EMILY'S *glances as though they were red hot darts. One of the girls gives a little cough by which she hopes to recall* MISS RACHEL *to genteel reticence. She succeeds.*

RACHEL, *flinging a final killing glance over her shoulder at* JINGLE, *hurries with very small steps to join the girls. They all go into the Inn with a rippling peal of titters.*]

JINGLE.

[*Shooting a non-existent cuff.*]

Fine gal, Sir.

TUPMAN.

[*Jealous and annoyed.*]

Very.

[SNODGRASS *heaves a sigh and dabs his forehead with his handkerchief. He keeps his eyes glued on the archway in the passionate hope that* EMILY WARDLE *will appear again.*]

JINGLE.

[*Reseating himself and refilling his glass from the bottle.*]

English girls not so fine as Spanish—noble creatures—jet hair—black eyes—lovely forms—sweet creatures—beautiful

TUPMAN.

[*With a certain awe.*]

You have lived in Spain, Sir?

JINGLE.

Lived there—ages.

TUPMAN.

Many conquests, Sir?

JINGLE.

Conquests! Thousands. Don Bolaro Fizzgig—grandee—only daughter—Donna Christina—jealous father—lovely to distraction—handsome Englishman—Donna Christina in despair—prussic acid—stomach pump in my portmanteau—operation performed—old Bolaro in ecstasies—consent to our union—join hands in floods of tears—romantic story—very.

TUPMAN.

[*Deeply impressed.*]

Is the lady in England now, Sir?

JINGLE.

Dead, Sir—dead—never recovered the stomach pump—undermined constitution—fell a victim.

SNODGRASS.

And her father?

JINGLE.

[*In a broken voice.*]

Remorse and misery. Sudden disappearance—talk of the whole city—search made everywhere—without success—public fountain in the great square suddenly ceased playing—weeks elapse—still a stoppage—workmen employed to clean it—water drawn off—father-in-law discovered sticking head first in the main pipe—with a full confession in his right boot—took him out—and the fountain played away again as well as ever.

SNODGRASS.

[*Deeply affected.*]

Will you allow me to note that little romance down?

JINGLE.

Certainly, Sir, fifty more if you like to hear 'em,—strange life mine—rather curious history —not extraordinary but singular—very.

[WARDLE *followed by* PERKER *comes out from coffee-room,* WARDLE *hurries to* MR. *Pickwick.*]

WARDLE.

I couldn't mistake that voice. Pickwick, my dear old fellow, how are you?

[*He smacks him on the back.*]

PICKWICK.

[*With great cordiality.*]

In the best of health and spirits, my dear friend; this is indeed a pleasure. Your charming daughters are well?

WARDLE.

All in fine fettle. Up to attend the ball. Delightful drive over the old road. You know Mr. Perker,—Gray's Inn?

PICKWICK.

Indeed, yes.

[*He shakes hands with* PERKER.]

Glad to see you again, Sir. Gentlemen, my friends Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass.

[*He looks round to include Jingle, who is gazing after* MISS RACHEL *with a calculating air.*]

And Mr.—Mr.—

JINGLE.

[*Turning.*]

Jingle, Sir—Alfred Jingle—*does* sometimes—*will* again—things looking up—very.

WARDLE.

[*Turning to Pickwick.*]

Are you still in those comfortable lodgings for a single gentlemen in Goswell Street, old fellow—looked after by that very respectable and capable Mrs. Bardell? How is she?

PICKWICK.

Yes, Wardle, I am still in Goswell Street and Mrs. Bardell is still as respectable and capable as usual. A kind but trying creature. But one can't have everything in this world.

WARDLE.

Well, I hope to see you all in the coffee-room after dinner.

PICKWICK.

With pleasure, Wardle.

WARDLE.

[*Clapping him on the back.*]

While the young people dance upstairs we'll make an evening of it. Ha, ha. Come then, Perker, if we hasten we may catch my tenant now.

[*He waves his hand to the group and walks off with* PERKER, *arm in arm.*]

PICKWICK.

You have rendered us a very important service, Mr. Jingle. Will you allow us to offer a slight mark of our gratitude by begging the favour of your company at dinner?

JINGLE.

Great pleasure—not presume to dictate, but broiled fowl and mushrooms—capital thing—what time?

PICKWICK.

Let me see. Shall we say seven?

JINGLE.

Suits me excellently—seven precisely.

[*He swaggers a few paces away from the table at the moment when* MISS RACHEL *comes out upon the gallery over the arch right. He pivots round as she gives a little cough in order to attract his attention. He raises his hat and winks at* MISS RACHEL, *who giggles and retires. And then, with a very gleeful and cunning expression on his face, as who*

should say "Gad, there's something in this. Money all about that woman," he turns, tips his hat to the gentlemen and waves his hand in a very friendly manner.]

JINGLE.

Till seven—care of yourselves.

[*He walks briskly under the centre arch and so into the High Street, but before he exits he drops the brown paper parcel which is sticking out of his pocket and goes through a clever and eccentric performance in picking it up without the risk of a burst.*]

PICKWICK.

Evidently a traveller in many countries and a close observer of men and things.

SNODGRASS.

I should like to see his poem.

WINKLE.

I should love to have seen that dog.

TUPMAN.

Donna Christina, the stomach pump and the fountain. Very moving indeed.

PICKWICK.

Let me remind you, gentlemen, that we too will soon be numbered among the great adventurers.

TUPMAN.

Ah yes, and how deeply I regret my inability to be present at the meeting today at the nomination of membership to the Corresponding Society of the Club which you, my dear friend, so sagaciously founded. I beg that you will describe to me how your paper on "Speculations on the source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some Observation on the Theory of Tittlebats" was received.

PICKWICK.

Very good, Tupman. The Association, if I may say so, heard my paper, to quote the words of the resolution, with feelings of unmingled satisfaction and unqualified approval.

WINKLE.

Hear, hear.

PICKWICK.

At the conclusion of the paper, standing thus

[*He mounts the Windsor chair assisted by* SNODGRASS *and* WINKLE *and even then with difficulty because of his very tight tights and stands with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails.*]

I observed that fame was dear to the heart of every man. Poetic fame was dear to the heart of my friend Snodgrass; the fame of conquest was equally dear to my absent friend Tupman; and the desire of earning fame in the sports of the field, the air and the water was upper-

most in the breast of my friend Winkle. I would not deny that *I* was influenced by human passions and human feelings. . . .

WINKLE.

Cheers.

PICKWICK.

Possibly by human weaknesses . . .

SNODGRASS.

Loud cries of "No."

PICKWICK.

But this I would say, I said, that if ever the fire of self importance broke out in my bosom the desire to benefit the human race effectually quenched it. The praise of mankind was my Swing, I said, philanthropy my insurance office.

WINKLE.

Vehement cheering.

PICKWICK.

I had felt some pride,—I acknowledged it freely and let my enemies make the most of it, —when I presented my Tittlebatian theory to the world; it might be celebrated or it might not.

WINKLE.

There were loud cries of "It is."

SNODGRASS.

And great cheering.

TUPMAN.

[*Rubbing his hands.*]
Naturally, naturally.

PICKWICK.

But if the fame of that theory were to extend to the furthest confines of the known world, I said, the pride with which I should reflect on the authorship of that production would be as nothing compared with the pride with which I looked around me on that, the proudest moment of my existence.

SNODGRASS.

Again cheers!

PICKWICK.

I said that I was a humble individual.

WINKLE.

No, no.

TUPMAN.

No, no, indeed.

PICKWICK.

Still, I could not but feel that I had been selected for a service of great honour and some danger. Travelling was in a troubled state,

the minds of coachmen were unsettled. Let them look abroad and contemplate the scenes which were enacting around them. Stage coaches were upsetting in all directions, horses were bolting and boilers were bursting.

SNODGRASS.

Cheers.

WINKLE.

And a voice "No."

PICKWICK.

No?

SNODGRASS.

Cheers.

PICKWICK.

Let that honourable Pickwickian who cried "No" so loudly, I said, come forward and deny it if he could.

SNODGRASS.

Cheers.

PICKWICK.

Who was it that cried "No?"

WINKLE.

[*Smacking the table.*]

Enthusiastic cheering.

PICKWICK.

Was it some vain and disappointed man—I would not say haberdasher,—

SNODGRASS.

[*Excitedly.*]

Loud cheers.

PICKWICK.

Who, jealous of the praise which had been—perhaps undeservedly—bestowed on my researches, and smarting under the censure which had been heaped upon his own feeble attempts at ribaldry, now took this vile and calumnious mode of—

WINKLE.

[*Bobbing up and down.*]

Mr. Blotten rose to order. Did the honourable Pickwickian allude to him, he shouted?

SNODGRASS.

Cries of "Order," "Chair," "Yes," "No," "Go on," "Leave off."

PICKWICK.

I would not be put down by clamour, I said. I had alluded to the honourable gentleman.

[*He points his finger at Tupman.*]

Great excitement, Tupman.

A403

WINKLE.

At which Mr. Blotten would only say that he repelled the hon. gent's false and scurulous accusation with profound contempt.

SNODGRASS.

Great cheering.

WINKLE.

The hon. gent was a humbug. Immense confusion and loud cries of "Chair" and "Order."

TUPMAN.

[*Profoundly moved and excited.*]

And so I should think, indeed.

SNODGRASS.

At which I, Snodgrass, rose to order, and threw myself upon the chair. I wished to know whether this disgraceful contest between two members of the Club should be allowed to continue.

WINKLE.

The chairman was quite sure the hon. Pickwickian would withdraw the expression he had just made use of.

SNODGRASS.

Mr. Blotten, with all possible respect for the Chair, was quite sure that he would not.

TUPMAN.

You don't say so.

SNODGRASS.

And so the Chairman felt it his imperative duty to demand of the honourable gentleman whether he had used the expression which had just escaped him in a *common* sense.

WINKLE.

Mr. Blotten had no hesitation in saying that he had *not*—he had used the word in its Pickwickian sense.

SNODGRASS.

Hear, hear.

WINKLE.

He was bound to acknowledge that, personally, he entertained the highest regard and esteem for the honourable gentleman; he had merely considered him a humbug from a Pickwickian point of view.

SNODGRASS.

Hear, hear.

PICKWICK.

Whereupon I said that I felt much gratified by the fair, candid and full explanation of my honourable friend. I begged it to be at once understood that my own observations had been merely intended to bear a Pickwickian

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construction. And here, having arrived at such a highly satisfactory and intelligible point, the debate terminated amid much friendliness and some wine.

TUPMAN.

Wonderful! A meeting as to which posterity shall hear!

PICKWICK.

[*Making several efforts to descend.*]

I'm afraid,—nay, I am positive, that these tights preclude me, unless there is an accident. . . .

[*Tupman springs forward on one side and* WINKLE *on the other to lend him a hand.*]

PICKWICK.

Thank you, thank you. Fashion, gentlemen, has its penalties, and a slight though perceptible tendency to stoutness its undoubted drawbacks.

[*The housekeeper emerges from beneath the arched corridor at right.*]

HOUSEKEEPER.

[*Sharply.*]

Sam, Sam.

[SAM WELLER *comes on from stables at a run.*]

HOUSEKEEPER.

Sam, the carpenters have built the musicians' platform at the wrong end of the ballroom.

SAM.

Well, it's no use talking about it now. It's over and can't be helped; that's one consolation, —as they always says in Turkey when they cut the wrong man's 'ead off.

[*He follows her up the stairs.*]

PICKWICK.

And now, my friends, we will go into the coffee-room to select our wine and order the dinner.

[*He places one hand on* SNODGRASS'S *arm and the other on* WINKLE'S *and thus they pass across to the coffee-room.*

PICKWICK.

[*Talking as they go.*]

Broiled fowl and mushrooms; cabbage, baked potatoes, roly poly pudding and a bland ripe Stilton to dally with as we circulate the port.

[*He chuckles happily and gives a funny little hop.*]

[*The three gentlemen enter the coffee-room.* TUPMAN *turns to the waiter who has come to clear the table.*]

TUPMAN.

What's going forward?

WAITER.

Ball, Sir.

TUPMAN.

Assembly, eh?

WAITER.

No, Sir, not assembly, Sir. Ball for the benefit of a charity, Sir.

TUPMAN.

Many fine women, I'll be bound. I should very much like to go, very much.

WAITER.

Tickets at the bar, Sir. Half a guinea each, Sir.

TUPMAN.

[*Thoughtfully.*]

Ah, ah.

[*He turns and looks up at the gallery before following his friends into the coffee-room; as he does so the waiter makes an exit with the tray in his hand. The stage has gradually darkened, the lights have been turned on in the coffee-room in which, through its open window,* PICKWICK *can be seen with a wine list in his hand, with* WINKLE *and* SNODGRASS *and eventually* TUPMAN. *One sees an old lamp lighter in the street set light to the oil lamp in the street. He then enters the court and lights a couple of lamps under the gallery, at rear centre. During this one hears the rattle of a pail in the stables and the noise of a horse's hoofs on the cobbles and the sharp voice of a stable boy calling out, "Woa, woa on there." The lamp lighter goes off into the stable yard with his pole across his shoulder as three musicians come in from the*

street,—one with a harp, in a green baize cover, carried on his back, the other with a long silver flute in a case, the third with a violin. They ascend to the gallery as there are more cries from the stable of "Steady, steady on," further sounds of horses' hoofs and the shutting of the door of a loosebox. Lights appear in various rooms in the gallery as SAM *clatters down the stairs carrying a paper in one hand and a pencil in his other, goes abstractedly to the trough and chews the pencil with a puzzled air. Old* WELLER *comes on from the stables.*]

TONY WELLER.

What's that you're a-doin' of, Sammy? Pursuit of knowledge under difficulties?

SAM.

[*With a slight embarrassment.*]

I've done now. I've been a-writin'.

TONY.

So I see. Not to any young 'ooman, I 'ope, Sammy?

SAM.

Well, it's no use a-sayin' it ain't. It's a love H'epistal.

TONY.

A wot?

SAM.

A letter o' love and h'affection.

TONY.

[*Aghast.*]

Samivel. Samivel! I didn't think you'd ha' done it. Arter the warning you've had o' your father's wicious propensities; arter actually seein' and bein' in the company o' your own mother-in-law, vich I should ha' thought wos a moral lesson as no man could never ha' forgotten to his dyin' day! It'll be a wery agonizing trial to me at my time o' life.

SAM.

Wot'll be a trial?

TONY.

To see you married, Sammy,—to see you a dilluded wictim.

SAM.

Nonsense, I ain't a-goin' to get married. Don't you fret yerself about that. Light your pipe and I'll read you the letter.

TONY.

[*Sitting down on the trough and lighting his pipe.*]

Fire away.

SAM.

[*With a very theatrical air.*]

"Loverly creetur!"

TONY

T'aint in potry, is it?

SAM.

No, no.

TONY.

[*Gravely.*]
Wery glad to hear it. Potry's unnatral.

SAM.

"Loverly creetur, I feel myself a damned—"

TONY.

[*Shocked.*]
That ain't proper.

SAM.

[*Peering at his paper.*]
No, it ain't "damned,"—its shamed. I feel myself ashamed.

TONY.

Wery good. Go on.

SAM.

"Feel myself ashamed and completely cir"—I forget what this 'ere word is.

TONY.

Why don't you look at it then?

SAM.

So I am a-lookin' at it,—but the light's bad. Here's a c and an i and a d.

TONY.

Circumwented, praps?

SAM.

No, it ain't that. Circumscribed—that's it.

TONY.

That ain't as good a word as circumwented, Sammy.

SAM.

Think not?

TONY.

[*Firmly.*]
Nothin' like it.

SAM.

But don't yer think it means more?

TONY.

[*Reflecting for a moment.*]
Vell, praps, it *is* a more tenderer word. Go on, Sammy.

SAM.

"Feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in addressin' of yer, for you are a nice gal and nothin' but it."

TONY.

That's a wery pretty sentiment, and I like that 'ere style of writin', 'cause there ain't no

callin' names in it,—no Wenunses nor nothin' of that kind. Wot's the good o' callin' a young 'ooman a Wenus or a h'angel. Drive on, Sammy.

SAM.

[*Reading.*]

"Afore I see you I thought all women was alike."

TONY.

So they are!

SAM.

"But now I find what a reglar soft-'earted inkred'lous turnip I must ha' been, for there ain't nobody like yer, though I like yer better than nothin' at all. So I take the priv'lidge, Mary, me dear, to tell yer that the first and only time I see yer yer likeness was took to me heart in much quicker time and brighter colours than ever a likeness was took by the profeel macheen,—although it *does* finish a portrait and put the frame and glass on complete,—with an 'ook at the end to 'ang it up by, and all in two minutes and a quarter. My dear Mary, I will now conclude." That's all.

[*He folds up the paper.*]

TONY.

That's rather a sudden pull up, ain't it, Sammy?

SAM.

Not a bit on it. She'll vish there was more, and that's the great art of letter writin'.

TONY.

Vell, there's somethin' in that; and I vish your mother-in-law 'ud only conduct her conversation on the same genteel principle.

[*During this scene the daylight has faded more and more so that the lights in the Inn have become stronger and one can see the lighted windows in the little shops across the street visible through the passage. One has seen* PICKWICK *and his friends drinking in the coffee-room and heard their laughter from time to time. The musicians in the ballroom start at this point to tune their instruments. One hears the repetition of the same note on the harp, the scraping of a violin and the soft notes of a flute.*

SAM.

I *could* end with a werse; wot do yer think?

TONY.

[*Shaking his head.*]

I don't like it, Sam. I never know'd a respectable coachman as wrote potry,—'cept one as made an affecting copy of werses the night afore he was hung for a highway robbery.

[*As the flautist plays a few running notes,* MARY *appears on the gallery and her pretty face and round red cheeks are lighted by the flame of a candle which she has in her hand.*]

MARY.

[*Calling.*]

Joe . . . Joe.

[*Her voice is followed by the trills of the flute in a soft and charming little melody.*]

SAM.

Sssh!

TONY.

[*In a hoarse whisper.*]

Oo is it?

SAM.

[*Looking up at* MARY.]

It's er, old 'un.

MARY.

Joe . . . Joe.

[*Again the flute trills sentimentally as all the lights fade into a blackout.*]

END OF SCENE I, ACT I.

ACT I.

Scene 2.

The same,—two hours later. The ball is in progress. One hears faintly the dance music (quadrille) which comes from the

orchestra stationed in the ballroom on the gallery floor. It is not loud because the mullioned windows are closed. Through these one sees the shadows of the dancers as they move about the room.

The casement window of the coffee-room has been thrown open so that one can see the party seated at the table, on which, beneath many candles, are the remains of dinner,—fruit, bottles of wine and so on. MR. PICKWICK *is seated at the head of the table with* WARDLE, PERKER *and* JINGLE. *As the curtain rises he is singing a song with great gusto in the chorus of which the three men join beating time on the table with their open hands.* MR. PICKWICK'S *countenance glows with an expression of universal philanthropy.*

Long live our British Gentlemen
Who like a bit of sport,
Who smoke their weed and swig their stout
And drink two bottles of port.

CHORUS

For they always go a rolling home,
They always go a rolling home,
A jolly lot are they!
Tra la la, Tra la la,
Slap bang, here we are again,
Slap bang, here we are again,
A jolly lot are we.

And get home with the morning milk
(The which of course is wrong)

EMILY WARDLE

And serenade the neighbourhood
With stanzas from this song.

CHORUS (*as above.*)

During this a sedan chair is brought in through the arch, preceded by a boy carrying a flaming torch which he puts in a sconce just inside the court. The chair is deposited at the foot of the stairs, as an elderly buck who has been leaning over the balustrade in the gallery, descends, and hands out an elderly dame, very gay in ribands and plumes, and leads her up to the ballroom. The linkboy gets into the sedan chair with a nice imitation of its former occupant and is carried by the two servants across the court and into the stableyard.

During the last chorus in the coffee-room SNODGRASS *and* WINKLE *emerge from the ballroom as the dance is over and can be seen paying marked attentions to* EMILY WARDLE *and* ARABELLA ALLEN *on the gallery.*

At the conclusion of the chorus MISS RACHEL WARDLE *emerges from the ballroom with her hand on the arm of* TRACY TUPMAN, *and as they come downstairs* JINGLE *rises from the table in the coffee-room, stands in a picturesque attitude silhouetted in the window, peers out at the descending* RACHEL *and returns to the table, having closed the window of the coffee-room.*

RACHEL.

[*With a simper.*]

I fear you will take cold in the evening air.

TUPMAN.

[*Gallantly.*]

No, no,—it will do me good. Shall we sit here for a moment where we can see the moon better?

RACHEL.

Oh, Mr. Tupman! Supposing I should be moonstruck.

TUPMAN.

[*Seizing her hand.*]

Miss Wardle, I can no longer restrain my pent-up feelings towards you. You are an angel.

RACHEL.

[*Hiding her face behind her fan but not withdrawing her hand.*]

Mr. Tupman!

TUPMAN.

[*Eloquently.*]

Nay,—I know it but too well.

RACHEL.

[*Playfully, standing in the court so that the moon falls on her face.*]

All women are angels, they say.

TUPMAN.

[*Waxing hotter.*]

Then what can *you* be; or to what, without presumption, can I compare you! Where was the woman ever seen who resembled you? Where else could I hope to find so rare a combination of excellence and beauty? Where else could I seek . . . Ah!

[*He presses her hand to his lips.*]

RACHEL.

[*Turning away her head.*]

Men are such deceivers.

TUPMAN.

They are. They are,—but not all men. There lives at least one being who can *never* change,—one being who would be content to devote his whole existence to your happiness,—who lives but in your eyes,—who breathes but in your smiles,—who bears the heavy burden of life itself only for you.

RACHEL.

[*Eagerly.*]

Could such an individual be found . . .

TUPMAN.

But he *can* be found,—he *is* found. He is *here*, Miss Wardle.

[*He sinks upon his knees.*]

RACHEL.

Mr. Tupman, rise.

TUPMAN.

Never! Oh, Rachel, Rachel, say you love me.

RACHEL.

[*Trembling with delight.*]

Mr. Tupman, I can hardly speak the words; but—but—you are not wholly indifferent to me.

[*Mr. Tupman no sooner hears this avowal than he proceeds to do what his enthusiastic emotions prompt, and what, for ought we know, for we are but little acquainted with such matters—people so circumstanced always do. He jumps up and, throwing his arms round the neck of the spinster aunt imprints upon her lips numerous kisses, which, after a due show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively that there is no telling how many more* MR. TUPMAN *might bestow but that the lady gives a very affected start and an exclamation of fright.*]

RACHEL.

Mr. Tupman, we are observed,—we are discovered!

[MR. TUPMAN *follows her eyes. There is* JOE *the fat boy sitting up in the water trough in which he has been lying asleep. He is perfectly motionless, with his large circular eyes staring at them, but without the slightest expression on his face that the most expert physiognomist could refer to astonishment, curiosity or any*

other known passion that agitates the human breast. TUPMAN *gazes at the fat boy and the fat boy stares at him, and the longer* MR. TUPMAN *observes the utter vacancy of the fat boy's countenance the more convinced he becomes that he either does not know, or does not understand, anything that has been going forward.*]

TUPMAN.

What do you want here, Sir?

JOE.

[*In a high squeaking voice.*]
Don't want nuthin', Sir.

TUPMAN.

[*Rising and going over to him.*]
Have you just waked up, Sir?

JOE.

[*Without a wink in his eye or a curve in his face.*]
Just.

TUPMAN.

[*Turning to* RACHEL.]
He knows nothing of what has happened.

RACHEL.

Nothing.

TUPMAN.

He must have been asleep.

RACHEL.

I haven't the least doubt of it.

[*He laughs and she laughs. He gives her his arm and together they return to the gallery, laughing all the way up.*]

Sam enters from stableyard at left as PICKWICK *comes to the window of the coffee-room with his hands in his pockets and his hat cocked completely over his left eye producing a constant succession of the blandest and most benevolent smiles without being moved thereunto by any discernible cause whatever. The fat boy ambles into the coffee-room and one sees him speaking to* MR. WARDLE.

PICKWICK.

Hooray.

[*He takes off his hat suddenly, dashes it to the floor and insanely casts his spectacles into the middle of the room. At this humorous feat he laughs outright.*]

SAM.

Hooray.

PICKWICK.

Hooray.

SAM.

Hooray.

PICKWICK.

[*Looking at* SAM *with a sort of earnest amusement.*]

Hoo . . . Who are you?

SAM.

Boots, yer Honour,—name of Veller, Samivel.

[*He goes up to the window and stands there grinning.*]

PICKWICK.

Why, bless me, of course, Veller—Samivel—Boots. I've often noticed you here, and how useful and smart you are.

SAM.

Thankee, Sir. Thankee. And I've often noticed you. How kind you are.

PICKWICK.

God bless my soul, you don't say so. That gives me a thought,—not that I am in any condition at the moment, I must confess, for consecutive thinking, Sam.

[*He bursts out laughing and puts his hand on* SAM'S *shoulder.*]

SAM.

No, Sir. No, Sir. Little porty, I see.

PICKWICK.

Porty's the word, Sam. You're a very amusing lad. I like you. As I think I said before,—indeed I'm quite under the impression that I said it before,—but I may be wrong, you give me a thought.

SAM.

Vell, that's somethin' new, that is. I aren't in a position to give much, as a gen'ral rule. Wot gen'rally 'appens is that people of a generous disposition gives things to me,—shillings and the like.

PICKWICK.

[*Putting his fingers into his waistcoat pocket and producing a shilling which he hands to* SAM.]

I beg your pardon, Sam.

SAM.

[*Spitting on the coin.*]

That's wery unexpected, Sir. A tip is better nor a wink to an 'ard-worked boots.

PICKWICK.

[*For no apparent reason.*]

Hooray.

SAM.

Hooray.

[PICKWICK *turns from the window and takes his hat and glasses from* JINGLE *as* MARY *comes out of the arched corridor at right with a large shawl over her arm which she proceeds to shake.* SAM *shuts the coffee-room window and makes a dive for* MARY.]

SAM.

[*Sliding up to* MARY.]

My dear, you'll spile that wery pretty figure out o' all proportion if you shake that by yourself.

MARY.

[*Uttering a half suppressed scream of surprise.*]

Lauk, Mr. Weller, how you do frighten one.

SAM.

All right. Here we are. Shake away.

[*He grasps one side of the shawl and shakes it with such force that it almost pulls* MARY *off her feet. As she falls towards him he catches her in his arms and gives her a hearty kiss.*]

MARY.

[*Struggling,—but not very hard.*]

Mr. Weller,—you don't mean to say you did that on purpose.

SAM.

No, I didn't; but I will.

[*He kisses her again.*]

MARY.

[*Pushing him away.*]

Lor, do a' dun, Mr. Weller! I never did.

[*She straightens her cap.*]

SAM.

You'll 'ave to get used to it, Mary, 'cos I don't mind a-tellin on yer that this is fate.

MARY.

Fate? What ever do you mean?

SAM.

Vell, I don't know as I can rightly describe it, but I 'ave a sort of feelin' that it's somethin' as can't be 'elped.

MARY.

[*Wide eyed.*]
Sort of mysterious like?

SAM.

Yes, that's it, mysterious. Somethin' 'as draws a man to a girl, and wice wersa,—as makes 'im do things as he doesn't know he's goin' to do,—like my kissin' you,—as makes a slave of 'im.

MARY.

I'm afraid I don't understand.

SAM.

Vell, I wrote it all down in this letter. Put it in your pocket, my dear, and when you've read it 'alf a dozen times,—praps more,—the truth'll dawn on yer.

[*He gives her the letter.*]

MARY.

Lawk, Mr. Weller, when did you learn to write? Fancy your being such a scholard. I must say I'm surprised.

SAM.

It's nothin' to wot you'll be when you knows me a little bit better. Meantime—another kiss.

[*He holds out his arms.*]

MARY.

[*Dodging and laughing coquettishly.*]
I'll read the letter first.

SAM.

[*Trying to catch hold of her arm.*]
But Mary, this 'ere's fate.

MARY.

[*Running to the stairs and turning.*]
It's the first time I've ever 'eard it called that name before.

SAM.

Vell, it's the fust time as you've ever met a man like me.

[*He springs forward and as she darts upstairs he dashes after her, slips on the stairs, picks himself up and follows her off.*]

[JINGLE *darts out of the coffee-room and goes swiftly up the stairs to the gallery.* TUPMAN

appears; and JINGLE, *seizing his arm, brings him down into the courtyard and speaks in a secretive manner.*]

JINGLE.

Sssh—important message from Miss Rachel—fat boy told Wardle everything—she's afraid of her brother—must avert suspicion—you must pretend to make love to Emily. She won't like it—but must be done—says there's no help for it—when old men blinded—crown your happiness.

TUPMAN.

[*In despair.*]

Did she send no other message?

JINGLE.

Love—best love—kindest regards—unalterable affection.

TUPMAN.

[*Grasping* JINGLE'S *hand.*]

My dear fellow, carry my best love; say how hard I find it to dissemble; say anything that's kind; but add how sensible I am of the suggestion she has made to me through you. Say I applaud her wisdom, admire her discretion.

JINGLE.

I will. Anything more?

TUPMAN.

Nothing; only add how ardently I long for the time when I may call her mine and all this simulation may be unnecessary.

JINGLE.

Certainly. Certainly.

[*He edges* TUPMAN *to the stairs and up.*]

Now go into the ballroom and remember,—all your attention to the niece. Rather rude than otherwise—to the aunt—only way of deceiving the old one.

TUPMAN.

[*Clasping* JINGLE'S *hand.*]

I'll take care. My dear friend, can I ever repay you?

[*With great emotion he goes into the ballroom.*]

[*As soon as* TUPMAN *disappears* JINGLE *without a moment's hesitation hastens to* RACHEL'S *door and knocks.* RACHEL *opens it instantly and gasps when she sees who it is.* JINGLE *lays his finger on his lips mysteriously, speaking quickly and with a wonderful assumption of deep earnestness.*]

JINGLE.

Miss Wardle—forgive intrusion—charming talk before dinner—short acquaintance—no time for ceremony—all discovered.

RACHEL.

[*Somewhat doubtful of* MR. JINGLE'S *sanity.*]

Sir!

JINGLE.

[*In a stage whisper.*]

Hugh—large boy—dumpling face—round eyes—rascal.

RACHEL.

[*Trembling with apprehension.*]

I presume you allude to Joseph, Sir.

JINGLE.

Yes, Ma'am, damn that Joe—treacherous dog, Joe—told the old man—old man furious—wild—raving—Tupman—kissing and hugging—all that sort of thing—eh, Ma'am,—eh?

RACHEL.

Mr. Jingle, have you come here, Sir, to insult me. . . .

JINGLE.

[*Unabashed.*]

Not at all—by no means—overheard the tale—came to warn you of your danger—tender my services—prevent the hubbub. Never mind—think it's an insult—I leave.

[*He turns as if to carry out the threat.*]

MISS RACHEL WARDLE AND ALFRED JINGLE

RACHEL.

[*Bursting into tears.*]

What *shall* I do! My brother will be furious.

JINGLE.

Will be?—*is!*—outrageous.

RACHEL

Oh, Mr. Jingle, what can I *say?*

JINGLE.

Why not say he dreamt it?

RACHEL.

Dreamt it!

JINGLE.

[*Following up this advantage.*]

Pooh-pooh!—nothing more easy—black guard boy—lovely lady—fat boy horsewhipped—you believed—end of the matter—all comfortable.

[*Rachel is greatly touched by* JINGLE'S *gallantry, and, as she throws him a glance of gratitude, that insinuating gentlemen heaves a deep sigh, fixes his eyes on the spinster's face for a moment with great intensity, gives a melodramatic start, claps his hand on his heart and turns his head away.*]

RACHEL.

You seem unhappy, Mr. Jingle. May I show my gratitude for your kind interference

by inquiring into the cause with a view, if possible, to its removal?

JINGLE.

[*His voice breaking.*]

Ho! Removal!—remove my unhappiness—and your love bestowed upon a man who is insensible to the blessing—who even now contemplates a design upon the affections of the niece of the creature who—but no; he is my friend; I will not expose his vices, Miss Wardle—farewell.

[*He applies to his eyes the remnant of a handkerchief and turns to go.*]

RACHEL.

[*Emphatically.*]

Stay, Mr. Jingle! You have made an allusion to Mr. Tupman; explain it.

JINGLE.

[*Theatrically.*]

Never!—Never!!

[*By way of showing that he has no desire to be questioned further, he draws the spinster aunt closer to himself.*]

RACHEL.

Mr. Jingle, I entreat, I implore you; if there is any dreadful mystery connected with Mr. Tupman, reveal it.

JINGLE.

[*Gazing into her face.*]

Can I—can I see—lovely creature—sacrificed at the shrine—heartless avarice!

[*He appears to be struggling with various conflicting emotions for a few seconds and continues in a low deep voice.*]

Tupman—only wants—your money.

RACHEL.

[*With energetic indignation.*]

The wretch!

JINGLE.

More than that—loves another.

RACHEL.

Another! Who?

JINGLE.

Short girl—black eyes—niece Emily.

RACHEL.

[*Tossing her head with an air of ineffable contempt, biting her thin lips, and bridling up.*]

It can't be. I won't believe it.

JINGLE.

Watch 'em.

RACHEL.

I will.

JINGLE.

Watch his looks.

RACHEL.

I will.

JINGLE.

His whispers.

RACHEL.

I will.

JINGLE.

He'll dance with her.

RACHEL.

Let him.

JINGLE.

He'll flatter her.

RACHEL.

Let him.

JINGLE.

He'll pay her every possible attention.

RACHEL.

Let him.

JINGLE.

And he'll—*cut* you.

RACHEL.

[*Screaming.*]
Cut me! He cut *me!* Will he!

JINGLE.

You will convince yourself?

RACHEL.

I will.

JINGLE.

You'll show your spirit.

RACHEL.

I will.

JINGLE.

You'll not have him afterwards?

RACHEL.

Never.

JINGLE.

You'll take somebody else?

RACHEL.

Yes.

JINGLE.

You shall!
[*He falls on his knees.*]
Miss Wardle—Rachel!—love you—may I claim you?

RACHEL.

[*In desperation.*]

Mr. Jingle,—even though I hardly know you—if Mr. Tupman's perjury is made clear and manifest,—yes!

[JINGLE *jumps up quickly, and is on the point of embracing her when* EMILY WARDLE, *escorted on one side by* MR. SNODGRASS *and on the other by* MR. TUPMAN, *comes out upon the gallery.* MR. TUPMAN *carrying out instructions, all but clasps the pretty Emily to him. He ogles, he whispers, he smiles, in opposition to young* SNODGRASS *who is growing extremely jealous. He even looks straight through* RACHEL *without as much as bestowing a glance of recognition.* WARDLE *stalks out of the coffee-room and looks from* JINGLE *and* RACHEL *who are at the bottom of the stairs to the three people on the gallery.*]

WARDLE.

Damn that boy! He must have been asleep. It was one of his ugly dreams.

[*He goes back into the coffee-room.*]

RACHEL.

[*To whom all this is a proof positive of unfaithfulness. It is almost more than the poor spinster aunt can bear.*]

Traitor! . . . Dear Mr. Jingle, you were *not* deceiving me. Ugh! How I hate the wretch.

[*With a ripple of laughter* EMILY *returns to the ballroom followed swiftly by* SNODGRASS

and TUPMAN. SNODGRASS *is very angry and jealous and he collides with* TUPMAN *at the ballroom door.*]

JINGLE.

[*Having watched them disappear.*]

Rachel—my own!—let us waste no time—pack bag—get jewels—elope—immediately!

[*While speaking he hurries* MISS RACHEL *up the stairs and all but pushes her into her room. He then goes to the door of the ballroom and beckons urgently to* TUPMAN.]

TUPMAN.

[*Coming out excitedly.*]

How did I do it?

JINGLE.

Splendid—capital—couldn't act better myself.

TUPMAN.

[*Grasping his hand.*]

Oh, my dear friend, can I ever repay you?

JINGLE.

Don't talk of it. Er—bye the bye—can't spare two pounds, can you?—very particular purpose—pay you in three days.

TUPMAN.

I dare say I can. Three days you say?

JINGLE.

[*Eyeing* RACHEL'S *door.*]

Only three days—all over then—no more difficulties!

[*He holds out his hand while* TUPMAN *gives him the money.*]

Thanks—be careful now—not a look.

TUPMAN.

Not a wink.

JINGLE.

Not a syllable.

TUPMAN.

Not a whisper.

[*He claps* JINGLE *on the shoulder and returns to the ballroom on the tips of his toes as* JINGLE *goes to* RACHEL'S *door and raps softly.* RACHEL *emerges in bonnet and shawl carrying a small box of which he immediately relieves her.*]

JINGLE.

Quiet!—not a sound!

[*They tiptoe down the stairs and arrive just in front of the coffee-room and are creeping towards the arched exit to the street when* WARDLE *followed by* MR. PICKWICK *and* PERKER *burst from the door laughing and singing.* WARDLE, *immediately catching sight of the eloping pair, stops as if struck, utters a loud exclamation of horror and*

amazement, which causes RACHEL *to scream and sink on to the bench.* JINGLE *drops the box.*]

WARDLE.

[*At the top of his voice.*]

You . . . you confounded rascal!

PICKWICK.

[*Beautifully tipsy.*]

Who . . . Who's a rashfounded conscal?

PERKER.

[*Attempting to restrain him as he is about to fall upon* JINGLE.]

My dear Sir, pray consider; defamation of character; action for damages. Calm yourself, my dear Sir.

PICKWICK.

Defamation for damages; calm your character, Sir.

WARDLE.

[*Trying to break away from* PERKER.]

How *dare* you drag my sister away.

PERKER.

Ay, you may ask that. How dare you, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*With tremendous dignity.*]

How dare you, Sir:

JINGLE.

[*Turning fiercely on* PERKER.]

Who the devil are you?

[PERKER *staggers back and collides with* MR. PICKWICK.]

PICKWICK.

[*Hopping away.*]

Perker—Ha! Ha!—you mished my favourite bunion by an inch!

WARDLE.

And you, Rachel, at a time of life when you ought to know better; what do you mean by running away with a vagabond, disgracing your family and making yourself miserable. Go to your room at once.

JINGLE.

[*To* RACHEL.]

Do nothing of the kind—lady's free to act as she pleases—more than one-and-twenty.

WARDLE.

[*Contemptuously.*]

More than one-and-twenty,—more than one-and-forty!

RACHEL.

[*Indignation getting the better of her determination to faint.*]

I ain't.

WARDLE.

Yes, you are. You're fifty if you're an hour.

[RACHEL *utters a piercing shriek and becomes senseless.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Greatly perturbed.*]

Water, a glass of water.

WARDLE.

[*Roaring like a bull.*]

A *glass* of water! Bring a bucket and throw it all over her; it'll do her good and she richly deserves it. Come along, I'll carry you upstairs.

[*At this proposition* RACHEL *comes to and goes into noisy hysterics.*]

PICKWICK.

Two buckets of water!

JINGLE.

[*To* SAM *who has entered from right.*]

Boots—get me an officer.

PERKER.

Stay, stay. Consider, Sir, consider.

JINGLE.

I'll not consider. She's her own mistress—see who dares to take her away unless she wishes it.

RACHEL.

I *won't* be taken away. I *don't* wish it!

PERKER.

[*Drawing* WARDLE *and* PICKWICK *aside and speaking in a low dry legal voice.*]

My dear Sir, we're in a very awkward position. Really, we have no power to control this lady's actions. There is nothing to look to but a compromise.

PICKWICK.

What kind of rompromise would you commerend?

PERKER.

We must be content to suffer some pecuniary loss.

PICKWICK.

Pecune—Pecun-nia-rary?

WARDLE.

I'll suffer any rather than submit to this disgrace, and let her, fool as she is, be made miserable for life.

PICKWICK.

Mizzerabable!

PERKER.

I rather think it can be done.

[*He oozes up to* JINGLE *insinuatingly.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Tapping* Wardle *on the arm.*]
He . . . *He'll* do it!

PERKER.

Sir, will you step this way for a moment?

JINGLE.

[*With his nose in the air.*]
Well?

PERKER.

Now, my dear Sir, between you and I, we know very well, my dear Sir, that you were running off with this lady for the sake of her money. Don't frown, Sir, don't frown; I say between you and I we know it.

[JINGLE'S *face relaxes and something distinctly resembling a wink quivers for an instant in his left eye.*]

Very good, very good. Now the fact is, that beyond a few hundreds, the lady has little or nothing till the death of her mother, whose family have all lived to eighty-five and over. The old lady is not seventy-three now, my dear Sir.

JINGLE.

Well?

PICKWICK.

He's . . . *He's* doing it!

PERKER.

Well, my dear Sir,—you don't take snuff? Ah, so much the better,—expensive habit,—well, my dear Sir, you're a fine young man of the world, able to push your fortune if you had capital, eh?

JINGLE.

Well?

PERKER.

Don't you think, my dear Sir, that fifty pounds and liberty would be better than Miss Wardle and expectations?

JINGLE.

[*Turning on his heel.*]
Won't do, not half enough.

PERKER.

[*Seizing him by the coat.*]
Nay, nay, my dear Sir, good round sum; a man like you could treble it in no time; great deal to be done with fifty pounds, my dear Sir.

JINGLE.

[*Cooly.*]
More to be done with a hundred and fifty.

PICKWICK.

He's . . . *He's* doing it.

PERKER.

Well, my dear Sir, we won't waste time in splitting straws. Say—say seventy.

JINGLE.

Won't do.

PERKER.

Well, my dear Sir, just tell me what *will* do.

JINGLE.

Let's see—compensation—breach of honour —loss of lady.

PERKER.

Say a hundred—come.

JINGLE.

And twenty.

PERKER.

Come, come, I'll write you a check. A hundred.

JINGLE.

And twenty.

PERKER.

My dear Sir,—

WARDLE.

Give it him and let him go.

PICKWICK.

Quite so. Let him give and go!

[PERKER *writes the cheque on the table and hands it to* JINGLE *with a sarcastic bow.* JINGLE *takes it with the tips of his fingers, holds it up to the light and replies with an equally sarcastic bow.*]

WARDLE.

[*Explosively.*]
And now leave this place instantly.

PICKWICK.

Instantlyly!

PERKER.

[*To* WARDLE.]
My dear Sir.

WARDLE.

And mind, that nothing should have induced me to make this compromise, not even a regard for my family, if I had not known that the moment you got any money in that pocket of yours you'd go to the devil faster if possible than you would without it.

PICKWICK.

Much fashter.

PERKER.

My dear Sir.

WARDLE.

Be quiet, Perker.

[*To* JINGLE *stamping his foot.*]

Leave this place, Sir.

JINGLE.

[*Unabashed and putting the cheque in his pocket.*]

Off directly—regards to Tuppy—the lady will do for *him*—bye bye Picky.

[PICKWICK'S *nostrils dilate and fists clench at being thus addressed.*]

PICKWICK.

You . . . you . . .

JINGLE.

Bah.

[*He flips his fingers in* PICKWICK'S *nose.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Calling.*]

Boy! Boy!

[SAM *comes out of the shadows, where he has been standing during this scene, as* JINGLE *claps on his hat, laughs into the faces of all the people present and goes jauntily off through the archway.*]

PICKWICK.

[*To* SAM.]

Go to my room at once. You will find my notebook on the dressing table. Bring it here to me. I must enter the authentic account of this amazing event before it slips my memory. The wine is in my head.

[*A hiccup escapes from him and he draws himself up with great dignity with his hand beneath his coat tails.*]

[*The exit of* JINGLE *leaves* PERKER *holding* WARDLE *back from dashing after* JINGLE *in a great rage.* RACHEL, *whose hysterics have risen and fallen during this scene, utters another loud scream and kicks her feet about.* SAM *runs upstairs and as one hears the commencement of another dance tune in the gallery the curtain falls.*]

END OF ACT I.

Act II.

Scene 1.

Living room of Mr. Pickwick's *apartments in Goswell Street.*

It is a small box set, with the mantelpiece in the centre of the rear wall, which is flanked on either side by bookcases which reach almost to the ceiling. There is a window right,—open at the moment, and a door left which opens outward into a hall. There is a minimum of furniture. In the corner up left there is a table, with candle sconces and papers, and in front of the fireplace there is a large armchair. Smaller chairs are set against the walls at right below and above the window. On the wall above the window there is a clock and on the mantelpiece there are two stuffed canaries under glass. Although on a limited scale, the room is not only of a very neat and comfortable description but peculiarly adapted for the residence of a man of genius and observation.

Mr. Pickwick *is standing with his back to the fire dictating a letter to* Mr. Winkle *who is seated at the table writing with a quill pen.*]

PICKWICK.

I have the honour to be, my dear Sir, your obleeged obedient servant.

WINKLE.

[*Writing.*]

Your obleeged obedient servant. You can use this pen, Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK.

Oh yes, yes. But before I subscribe my name, Winkle, be so good as to read over the final paragraph, if you please, as impressively as you can.

WINKLE.

Certainly, my dear Sir.

[*He rises, places himself in a dignified attitude and reads the letter; while* MR. PICKWICK *listens with critical attention, beating time with his spectacles.*]

And so, my dear Mr. Sniggers, under the leadership of one who cannot but entertain a lively sense of the inestimable benefits which must inevitably result from carrying his speculations, observations and travels into a wider field, to the advancement of knowledge and the diffusion of learning, the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club depart from London tomorrow, armed with the special notebooks designated to their use. With my compliments to your charming family and very kind regards.—

PICKWICK.

I have the honour, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, Yes. Thank you, Winkle.

[*He goes gravely to the table and signs the letter; upon which he looks up with an air of sudden and deep excitement.*]

Tomorrow!

WINKLE.

[*In the same tone.*]

Tomorrow.

PICKWICK.

Tomorrow.

[*Then solemnly.*]

Tomorrow is, ah! whose? . . . A great thought, Winkle.

WINKLE.

[*In a low voice.*]

Indeed, yes, Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK.

[*Gaily again.*]

But today is ours, Winkle, and for myself, after so many years of close confinement in my office, I have the desire to *fly* into tomorrow, like a bird escaped from a cage.

[*He poses as a bird on the wing with a series of little chuckles.*]

WINKLE.

[*Licking the envelope and closing it with a flourish.*]

And now, Sir, if you so desire, I will drop this in the pillar box on the way to buy a knife.

PICKWICK.

[*Puzzled.*]

A knife?

WINKLE.

A sporting knife,—with implements for removing hooks from the mouths of fish, stones from horses' hoofs . . .

PICKWICK.

[*Tapping his arm.*]

And corks from bottles of wine.

WINKLE.

[*Going to get his hat with a merry laugh.*]

We'll cut a capper on the road!

PICKWICK.

Ah ha! Oh, and Winkle, before you leave the house, to return as soon as you can, I should be glad if you will request Mrs. Bardell's presence in this room.

WINKLE.

Very well, my dear Sir.

PICKWICK.

I have sent her boy to the White Hart with a note to young Sam Weller.

WINKLE.

The lively Boots?

PICKWICK.

Yes, yes, I like that lad. And as I need a servant when I leave this house I have decided to make him an offer. He will be useful to us all.

WINKLE.

Excellent idea.

PICKWICK.

It will be kind, as well as tactful, to let Mrs. B. know of my intention, so that she may be prepared to make him comfortable when we all return.

[*He pulls out his watch.*]

He should be here by now.

WINKLE.

I will hurry there and back. If I see Tupman and Snodgrass . . .

PICKWICK.

Hasten their steps, my friend.

[WINKLE, *singing a snatch of a song, goes off jauntily, putting a straw in his mouth.*

PICKWICK *stands under the emotion of great excitement, and then, as a sort of safety valve, goes up to a small table at the side of the fireplace and winds up a music box. To the tinkling sound of this he performs a little dance. Hearing* MRS. BARDELL'S *cough outside, he pulls up and places himself gravely with his back to the fire.*]

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Oozing into the room.*]

You sent for me, Sir?

PICKWICK.

Yes, Mrs. Bardell. I am going to tell you something. Do what you have to do to the room while I see if there's any sign of your boy.

MRS. BARDELL.

Yes, Sir.

[*She gives him an eager and sentimental look and commences to dust the writing table. After a pause.*)

It's nice to have you back, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Halting for a moment.*]

For tonight only, Mrs. Bardell. My friend Mr. Tupman had business in London which delayed our peregrinations. Looking to which I seized the opportunity to sleep at home last night and proceed this morning to a course upon which I have suddenly made up my mind.

[*He continues his ambling, thinking aloud as he does so.*]

Sam Weller,—a good lad and cheerful. A useful lad, I need such a lad . . . Mrs. Bardell.

MRS. B.

Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Worried.*]

Your little boy's a very long time gone.

MRS. B.

Why, it's a good long way to the Borough, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Pocketing his watch.*]

Ah, very true; so it is.

[*He goes to the mantelpiece, stands there thoughtfully for a moment and wheels round suddenly.*]

Mrs. Bardell.

MRS. B.

Sir.

PICKWICK.

Do you think it a much greater expense to keep two people than to keep one?

MRS. B.

[*With a strange coyness and excitement, brought about by her fancy that she observes a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger.*]

La, Mr. Pickwick, what a question!

PICKWICK.

Well, but *do* you?

[*He sits in the easy chair.*]

MRS. B.

That depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, Sir.

PICKWICK.

That's very true, but the person I have in my

[*He looks very hard at* MRS. B.]

eye. I think possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell; which may be of material use to me.

MRS. B.

[*All of a twitter.*]

La, Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK.

[*Growing energetic.*]

I do, I do indeed; and to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind.

MRS. B.

[*Breathing quickly.*]

Dear me, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*With a good natured glance at his companion.*]

You'll think it very strange now that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh?

MRS. B.

[*Who has long worshipped* MR. PICKWICK *at a distance and is now led to believe that she is about to be raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire.*]

Oh, Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK.

Well, what *do* you think?

MRS. B.

[*Trembling with agitation.*]

Oh, Mr. Pickwick, you're . . . you're very kind, Sir.

PICKWICK.

It'll save you a good deal of trouble, won't it?

MRS. B.

Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, Sir. And of course I shall take more trouble to please you then than ever; but it is so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness.

PICKWICK.

Ah, to be sure; I never thought of that. When I am in town you will always have somebody to sit with you. To be sure, so you will.

MRS. B.

I'm sure I ought to be a very happy woman.

PICKWICK.

And your little boy,—

MRS. B.

[*With a maternal sob.*]

Bless his heart!

PICKWICK.

[*Smiling placidly.*]

He, too, will have a companion, a lively one, who will teach him, I'll be bound, more tricks in a week than he would ever learn in a year.

MRS. B.

[*Letting herself go.*]

Oh, you dear!

[PICKWICK rises in astonishment.]

MRS. B.

Oh you kind, good, playful, dear.

[*Without more ado she flings her arms round* PICKWICK'S *neck with a cataract of tears and a chorus of sobs.*]

PICKWICK.

Bless my soul; Mrs. Bardell, my good woman dear me, what a situation—pray consider. Mrs. Bardell, don't—if anybody should come—

MRS. B.

[*Frantically.*]

Oh, let them come; I'll never leave you—dear, kind, good soul.

[*She gives him a tighter hug.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Struggling violently.*]

Mercy upon me. I hear somebody coming up the stairs. Don't. Don't. There's a good creature, don't.

[*Entreaty and remonstrance are alike unavailing, for* MRS. BARDELL *has fainted in* MR. PICKWICK'S *arms; and, before he can gain time to deposit her on a chair,* MASTER BARDELL *enters the room, followed by* TUPMAN, WINKLE *and* SNODGRASS.

PICKWICK *is struck motionless and speechless. He stands with his lovely burden in his arms gazing vacantly on the countenances of his friends without the slightest attempt at recognition or explanation. They in their*

turn stare at him; and MASTER BARDELL *in his turn stares at everybody.*]

The astonishment of the PICKWICKIANS *is so absorbing and the perplexity of* MR. PICKWICK *so extreme that they may remain in exactly the same relative situations until the suspended animation of the lady is restored. But for a most beautiful and touching expression of filial affection on the part of her youthful son. Clad in a tight suit of corduroy, spangled with brass buttons of a very considerable size, he, at first stands at the door, astounded and uncertain; but by degrees the impression that his mother may have suffered some personal damage pervades his partially developed mind, and considering* MR. PICKWICK *as the aggressor, he sets up an appalling and semi-earthly kind of howling, and butting forward with his head, commences assailing that immortal gentleman about the back and legs.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Agonized.*]

Take this little villain away; he's mad.

TUPMAN.

What—what—what

WINKLE.

What is the—the

SNODGRASS.

Matter.

PICKWICK.

[*Pettishly.*]

I don't know. Take away the boy.

[WINKLE *pounces upon the interesting boy and carries him screaming and struggling to the further end of the apartment.*]

PICKWICK.

Now help *me;* lead this woman downstairs.

MRS. B.

[*Faintly, but with her whole weight upon* PICKWICK.]

Oh, I am better now.

PICKWICK.

Please.

TUPMAN.

[*Approaching the lady gallantly.*]

Let me lead you downstairs.

MRS. B.

[*Hysterically.*]

Thank you, Sir. Thank you.

[PICKWICK *gives her a heave and she falls into* TUPMAN'S *arms. The boy utters another howl and runs to kick* TUPMAN'S *legs. He is caught by* WINKLE *who snatches him away. Relieved of his burden* MR. PICKWICK *staggers to the mantelpiece and stands there mopping his brow and rearranging his garments.*]

TUPMAN.

This way, my good Mrs. Bardell.

MRS. B.

Thank you, Sir, thank you.

[*As* TUPMAN *leads her towards the door she releases herself suddenly from his hand and with a burst of sentimental joy pounces upon* PICKWICK, *gives him a bear-like hug which lifts him from his feet.*]

PICKWICK.

Don't. Don't—dear me, dear me,—Mrs. Bardell, pray!

[*Raising another howl the boy makes a bull-like rush towards* PICKWICK *and once again is snatched by* WINKLE *and twisted away.*]

TUPMAN.

[*Receiving* MRS. B. *into his arms as* PICKWICK *once more heaves her away.*]

Yes, yes, now come.

[*As he leads her to the door* MRS. B. *bursts into an hysterical display of laughter and tears, which she keeps up across the room and into the passage. The boy follows her, emitting further appalling howling.* WINKLE, *crossing quickly to the door, shuts it; and then turns to* SNODGRASS, *and, with a peculiar smile, winks at him.* SNODGRASS *doubles up with painfully suppressed laughter.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Indignant and breathless.*]

I cannot conceive,—I cannot conceive what has been the matter with that woman. I had merely announced to her my intention of keeping a man servant when she fell into the extraordinary paroxysm in which you found her.

[TUPMAN *returns.*]

Very extraordinary thing.

WINKLE.

Very.

SNODGRASS.

Very.

TUPMAN.

[*In a deep bass voice.*]

Very.

PICKWICK.

Placed me in such an extremely awkward situation.

WINKLE.

Very.

SNODGRASS.

Very.

TUPMAN.

[*In a still deeper voice.*]

Very.

[*All three men cough slightly, look dubiously at each other and show a dis-belief and an incredulity which is not lost upon* MR. PICKWICK. *It is obvious that they suspect him. Their behaviour irritates him very much.*

PICKWICK.

Do you wish me to imagine, gentlemen, that you conceive the vaguest possibility. . . .

TUPMAN.

Pardon me. There is a man in the passage.

PICKWICK.

It's the man I spoke to you about. I sent for him to the Borough. This morning. Have the goodness to call him up, Snodgrass. I am indeed surprised, my friends, at your suspicious attitude towards me in this matter, which I have fully explained. When this interview is over I will refer to it again.

[SNODGRASS *crosses to the door and opens it and there stands* SAM WELLER.]

SAM WELLER.

[*Striking an attitude.*]

Veller,—Sam, Boots and arrands, nimble and always on the spot.

PICKWICK.

Ah,—you remember me, I suppose?

SAM.

[*With a patronizing wink.*]

I should think so. Queer start, that 'ere Jingle. But he was one too many for you, warn't he? Up to snuff and a pinch or two over,—eh?

PICKWICK.

[*Hastily.*]

Never mind about that now. I want to speak to you about something else. Sit down.

SAM.

Thankee, Sir.

[*He puts his old white hat on the table.*]

T'aint a very good 'un to look at, but it's an astonishin' un to wear; and afore the brim went it was a wery 'andsome tile. Hows'ever, it's lighter without it that's one thing, and every 'ole lets in some air, that's another—wentilation gossamer, I calls it.

[*And having smiled agreeably upon the assembled Pickwickians, he sits.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Standing in front of the fireplace.*]

Now, with regard to the matter on which I, with the concurrence of these gentlemen, sent for you.

SAM.

That's the pint, Sir; out vith it, as the father said to the child when he swallowed a farden.

PICKWICK.

We want to know, in the first place, whether you have any reason to be discontented with your present situation.

SAM.

Afore I answers that 'ere question, gen'l'm'n, *I* should like to know, in the first place, whether you're a-goin to prowide me with a better.

PICKWICK.

[*With a smile of placid benevolence.*]

I have half made up my mind to engage you myself.

SAM.

'ave you though? Wages?

PICKWICK.

Twelve pounds a year.

SAM.

Clothes?

PICKWICK.

Two suits.

SAM.

Work?

PICKWICK.

To attend upon me and travel about with me and these gentlemen here, seeking adventure and improvement of the mind.

SAM.

[*Emphatically.*]

Take the bill down. I'm let to a single gen'lm'n, and the terms is agreed upon.

PICKWICK.

You accept the situation?

SAM.

Cer'tn'ly. If the clothes fits me 'alf as well as the place they'll do.

PICKWICK.

You can get a character, of course?

SAM.

Ask the landlady o' the White Hart about that, Sir.

PICKWICK.

Can you come this evening?

SAM.

[*Springing to his feet.*]

I'll get into the clothes this minute if they're 'ere.

PICKWICK.

They *are* here.

[*He points to a bundle on a chair.*]

SAM.

[*Pouncing upon the bundle and pulling out a grey coat with the P. C. button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, light breeches and gaiters.*]

Ah ha!

PICKWICK.

We are to join my friend Mr. Wardle on a hunting party in Kent tomorrow. Will you enquire of your father, Sam, if he can drive us there?

SAM.

Right you are, Sir. The old 'un will drive you, never fear.

[*He holds up the various garments.*]

I wonder whether I am meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a gamekeeper, or a seedsman. I shall look like a sort of compo of every one of 'em. Never mind; there's change of air, plenty to see, and little to do; and all this suits my complaint uncommon; so long life to the Pickvicks, says I!

PICKWICK.

[*Laughing heartily.*]

You make me laugh, young man, and laughter is good for the soul! On our travels, and in moments of possible danger, we shall stand in need of a shrewd and nimble fellow. Honest,

I *see* that you are. Faithful, I judge you to *be*. Sam! . . .

[*He holds out his hand with a kind and generous gesture.* SAM *darts forward and grasps it warmly, looking up at* MR. PICKWICK *with his merriest grin.*]

[*Lights black out.*]

ACT II.

Scene 2.

It is a crisp and cloudless day in very late autumn. The backdrop represents a typical Kentish landscape with bare trees, hedges with only just a few brown leaves left upon them, and stretches of earth after the harvest with here and there green patches.

The set is shallow. Just in front of the backdrop extending from left to right is an uneven hedge, its highest point about 4 ft. cut in the centre by a five-barred gate. At right angles to the hedge, about centre, a low-ish fence runs downstage and in the middle of this there is a gap where the wood has broken away. It is the dividing line between the estates of SIR GEOFFREY MANNING *and* CAPTAIN BOLDWIG. *The left hand,* BOLDWIG'S *land rises in a sort of knoll towards the rear of the set and this is covered with dead leaves and bracken which has turned red. On the right side, in the corner formed by the hedge and the fence, there is a large mass of soft dried leaves which have*

been raked together in a pile. In the rear right corner stands a wheelbarrow in which there are more dead leaves. The lighting of this set is golden, showing that it is early afternoon,—about quarter past one.

On rise of curtain MARTIN, *a tall, raw-boned gamekeeper and a half-booted leather-legginged boy, holding on to a couple of retrievers, are discovered.* MARTIN *is leaning on the five-barred gate smoking a pipe.* PICKWICK'S *voice is heard off right.*

PICKWICK.

If I remember Mr. Wardle's directions correctly, Weller, I should say that this is the place.

[*He enters with Tony Weller.*]

TONY.

So should I, Mr. Pickwick, Sir.

[SAM follows on carrying a carriage rug.]

PICKWICK.

[*To* MARTIN.]

Good morning, good morning—or rather, good afternoon. Will you be good enough to tell me if this is Sir Geoffrey Manning's estate?

MARTIN.

[*Touching his cap.*]

Aye, Sir, it be. Mr. Wardle he says for me to be on the look-out for you, Sir, and t'other gen'lmen which will be 'ere directly, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Beaming.*]

Thank you. Thank you. A glorious day. Crisp, very crisp.

SAM

[*Putting down the rug and blowing his fingers.*]

Fine for them as is well wropped up,—as the Polar bear said to himself vhen he was practisin' his skating.

PICKWICK.

[*To* TONY WELLER *who is clapping his hands to his sides to keep himself warm.*]

Before you leave us, Weller, I think perhaps a mouthful of brandy would do you good. It *is* a little chilly.

[*He produces a small silver flask and pours a little of the liquid into a cup which he removes from the bottom of it.*]

TONY.

Thankee, Mr. Pickvick, Sir. A little drop of this 'ere *vill* go to the cockles.

SAM.

Take care, ancient, or you'll 'ave a pinch of your old complaint, the gout.

TONY.

[*Having lowered the brandy.*]

I've found a sovrin cure for that, Sammy.

[*He hands back the cup to* MR. PICKWICK.]

PICKWICK.

[*Taking out his notebook with great interest.*]

A sovereign cure for the gout! What is it?

TONY.

The gout, Sir, is a complaint as arises from too much ease and comfort. If ever you're attacked with the gout, Sir, just you marry a widder as 'as got a good loud voice, with a decent notion of using it, and you'll never 'ave it again. It's a capital prescription, Sir. I takes it reg'lar, and I can warrant it to drive away any illness as is caused by too much jollity.

[*He sighs deeply. As he goes right to make an exit he receives a playful dig in the ribs from* SAM.]

TONY.

See you later, Sir. Thankee kindly, Sir.

[*He touches his hat and goes off.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Putting his book away.*]

Well, Sam, what is your opinion of your father's remarks?

SAM.

Why, Sir, I think he's the wictim o' connubiality,—as Bluebeard's domestic chaplain said with a tear of pity vhen he buried him.

[WARDLE, *in his heartiest mood, enters from left followed by* WINKLE *and* TUPMAN. WARDLE *goes over to the dogs.*]

WARDLE.

Hi, Juno lass,—hi Daph, old girl,—hi, hi. Well Pickwick, a fine day for sport, old boy. Delighted that you and your good friends have come down to spend Christmas with us.

PICKWICK.

The delight is all on our side, Wardle. Your kindness is overwhelming.

WARDLE.

Mr. Snodgrass has remained behind at Manor Farm. He and my rosy little Emily seemed to be having too interesting a conversation to allow of interruption.

[*He laughs loudly, winks at* MR. PICKWICK *and turns to* MARTIN.]

Morning, Martin. Sir Geoffrey's still in Scotland, I suppose?

MARTIN.

Yes, Sir.

WINKLE.

[*Pointing at the hunting bags.*]

I say, you don't suppose we're going to kill game enough to fill those bags, do you?

WARDLE.

Fill them! Bless you, yes. You shall fill one and I the other, and when we've done with them the pockets of our shooting jackets will hold as much more.

WINKLE.

If we stay in the open air as long as that we stand a considerable chance of catching colds in our heads.

MARTIN.

[*Who has been looking from* WINKLE *to* TUPMAN *with some uneasiness.* WINKLE *is holding his gun as if he wished his coat pocket to save him the trouble of pulling the trigger and* TUPMAN *is holding his as if he were afraid of it,—and there is no earthly reason to doubt that he really is.*]

You mustn't 'andle your piece in that 'ere way when you come to 'ave a charge in it, Sir, or I'm damned if you won't make cold meat of some on us.

[WINKLE, *thus admonished, abruptly alters the position of his gun, and in so doing contrives to bring the barrel in pretty sharp contact with* SAM'S *head.*]

SAM.

[*Rubbing his forehead.*]

Hallo, hallo, Sir, if you comes it this vay you'll fill one o' them bags and something to spare at one fire.

[*Here the leather-legginged boy bursts into a hearty roar and then tries to look as if it were somebody else: whereat* WINKLE *frowns majestically.*]

WARDLE.

[*To* MARTIN.]

My friends are not much in the way of this sort of thing yet, Martin. Live and learn, you know. They'll be good shots one of these days. I beg my friend Winkle's pardon, though; *he* has had some practice.

[WINKLE *smiles feebly in acknowledgment of the compliment and gets himself so mysteriously entangled in his gun in his modest confusion that, if the piece had been loaded, he must inevitably have shot himself dead upon the spot.*]

PICKWICK.

That's not Sir Geoffrey's land, is it?

MARTIN.

No, Sir, but it's close by it. This 'ere fence is the dividing line. That's Captain Boldwig's land but there'll be nobody to interrupt us and there's a fine bit of turf over yonder.

[*He points off left.*]

WARDLE.

Captain Boldwig's wife's sister married a Marquis and the Captain calls his house a villa and his land ground and is very high and mighty and great.

PICKWICK.

[*Taking out his notebook.*]

That is worthy of note.

WARDLE.

We've time for a shot or two before we fall on the luncheon basket. The boy's coming along with it now. Will you wait for us here, Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK.

[*Ruefully.*]

Why, I suppose I must.

MARTIN.

An't the gentleman a shot, Sir?

WARDLE.

No, Martin,—and besides he finds it difficult to get about on this uneven ground.

PICKWICK.

[*Wistfully.*]

I should very much *like* to go,—*very* much.

BOY

There's a barrow by the hedge. If the gentleman's servant would wheel along the paths 'e could keep nigh us and we could lift it over the stiles and that.

[PICKWICK *looks humiliated and heaves a sigh.*]

SAM.

[*Who longs ardently to see the sport.*]

The wery thing. Well said, small cheek. I'll 'ave it out in a minute.

[*He makes a dart at the barrow and dumps out the leaves.*]

MARTIN.

[*Cuffing the inventive youth and protesting to* MR. WARDLE.]

Mr. Wardle, Sir, a gen'lman in a barrow at a shooting party is a gross violation of all established rules and precedents.

WARDLE.

What if it is? Come along, my friends, let's be off, and get a shot or two. Hi, Juno lass, hi, hi, Daphne.

[*He marches left with* MARTIN, *the dogs with the boy in front.*]

[SAM *places the barrow behind* MR. PICKWICK *who gives it a doubtful look, flicks it with his handkerchief and then, with some difficulty proceeds to sit in it with his little legs hanging out.* WINKLE *and* TUPMAN *are following* WARDLE *off.* SAM *pushes the barrow after them.*]

PICKWICK.

Stop, Sam.

WARDLE.

[*Turning round at exit.*]

What's the matter now?

PICKWICK.

[*Resolutely.*]

I won't suffer this barrow to be moved another step unless Winkle carries that gun of his in a different manner.

WINKLE.

[*Wretchedly.*]

How *am* I to carry it?

PICKWICK.

Carry it with the muzzle to the ground.

WINKLE.

It's so unsportsman like.

PICKWICK.

I don't care whether it's unsportsman like or not. I'm not going to be shot in a wheelbarrow for the sake of appearances to please anybody.

MARTIN.

[*From the exit.*]

I know the gen'leman will put that 'ere charge into somebody before he's done.

WINKLE.

[*Turning his gunstock uppermost.*]

Well, well,—I don't mind. There.

SAM.

Anythin' for a quiet life.

[*He pushes the barrow on.*]

PICKWICK.

Stop.

WARDLE.

What now?

PICKWICK.

That gun of Tupman's is not safe; I know it isn't.

TUPMAN.

[*Greatly alarmed.*]

Eh! What! Not safe?

PICKWICK.

Not as you're carrying it. I'm very sorry to make any further objection, but I cannot consent to go on unless you carry it as Winkle does his.

MARTIN.

I think you'd better, Sir, or you're quite as likely to lodge the charge in yourself as in anybody else.

[*With the most obliging haste* TUPMAN *places his piece in the position required; the two amateurs marching with reversed arms like a couple of privates at a royal funeral.*]

WINKLE.

[*Looking off.*]

What's the matter with the dogs' legs? How queer they're standing.

WARDLE.

Hush, can't you. Can't you see they're making a point?

WINKLE.

Making a point? Making a point of what?

WARDLE.

Keep your eyes open. Now then.

[*He raises his gun to his shoulder and fires both barrels.* WINKLE *starts back as if he were shot.* TUPMAN *is greatly alarmed and* PICKWICK *bobs up and down in the barrow.* SAM *in a high state of excitement calls out "Hallo, hallo."*]

WINKLE.

[*Turning round and round.*]

Where are they? Where are they? Tell me when to fire?

[*He waves his gun about in a most dangerous manner which makes* PICKWICK *curl up in the barrow for safety,* SAM *lie flat on his stomach and* TUPMAN *hide behind the gate.*]

WARDLE.

Where are they?

[*The boy runs on with a brace of birds.*]

Why, here they are.

WINKLE.

No, no, I mean the others.

WARDLE.

[*Reloading his gun.*]

Far enough by this time.

MARTIN.

If the gen'leman begins to fire now he'll just get the shot out of the barrel by the time the next lot rise.

[TUPMAN, *extremely excited and nervous, fires his gun by accident and the shots go into the pile of leaves.* SAM *roars with laughter, clapping his hands on his knees. The boy joins in.* MARTIN *is in utter disgust.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Sympathizing with* TUPMAN'S *confusion and embarrassment.*]

Sam.

SAM.

Sir.

PICKWICK.

Don't laugh.

SAM.

Cert'nly not, Sir.

[SAM *contorts his features from behind the wheelbarrow for the exclusive amusement of the boy with the leggings who thereupon bursts into another boisterous laugh and is summarily cuffed by* MARTIN *who wants a pretext for turning round to hide his own amusement.*]

WARDLE.

[*To* TUPMAN.]

Brave, old fellow. You fired that time at all events.

TUPMAN.

[*With conscious pride.*]

Yes, yes, yes. I let it off.

WARDLE.

Well done. You'll hit something next time if you look sharp. Very easy, ain't it?

TUPMAN.

Yes, it's very easy. How it hurts one's shoulder, though. It nearly knocked me backwards.

WARDLE.

[*Smiling.*]

You'll get used to it in time.

PICKWICK.

[*Sitting up in the barrow.*]

I wonder if *I* shall.

WINKLE.

[*Peering up at the sky with his gun ready and backing into the gate. He is so surprised at this that he pulls the trigger and falls flat on his back.*]

Get used to anything with a little practice.

[PICKWICK, *with a little cry, tries once more to fold himself up in the barrow.*]

WARDLE.

Why, what on earth did you do that for?

WINKLE.

[*Picking himself up.*]

I never saw such a gun in my life. It goes off on its own accord. It *will* do it.

WARDLE.

Will do it! I wish it would kill something of its own accord.

MARTIN.

[*In a deep prophetic tone.*]

It'll do that afore long, Sir.

WINKLE.

[*Stalking over to* MARTIN *angrily.*]

What do you mean by that observation, Sir?

MARTIN.

[*Soothingly.*]

Never mind, Sir, never mind. I've no family myself, Sir, and this 'ere boy's mother will get something 'andsome from Sir Geoffrey if he's murdered on his land. Load again, Sir, load again.

PICKWICK.

['So horror stricken at MARTIN'S *dark insinuations that he scrambles out of the barrow.*]

Take away his gun. Do you hear, somebody? Take away his gun.

[A boy enters from rear left carrying a large luncheon basket. Over his shoulders are slung a couple of stone bottles fastened together by a leathern strap.]

WARDLE.

Ah, here's the boy with the basket. Punctual as clockwork.

PICKWICK.

[*Delighted and relieved.*]

So he is, so he is. Good boy, that. He has saved at least four lives. I'll give him a shilling presently.

WARDLE.

Sam, unpack the things and set them on the grass. I could eat an ox.

PICKWICK.

And I confess to feeling a somewhat urgent thirst.

[PICKWICK, WINKLE *and* WARDLE *surround the basket, while* MARTIN *and the two boys take the guns and stack them against the gate.*]

SAM.

Wery good, Sir.

[*He leaves the barrow centre, darts to the basket and proceeds to unpack it with the utmost dexterity.*]

Weal pie. Wery good thing is weal pie, ven you know the lady as made it and is quite sure it ain't kittens: and, after all, though, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don't know the difference.

PICKWICK.

Don't they, SAM?

SAM.

[*Placing things as he speaks.*]

Not they, Sir. I lodged in the same 'ouse vith a pieman once, Sir, and a wery nice man 'e was—reg'lar clever chap too—make pies out o' anythin', he could. "Wot a number o' cats you keep, Mr. Brooks," says I, when I got intimate with 'im. "Ah," says 'e, "I do—a good many," says 'e. "You must be wery fond o' cats," says I. "Other people is," said 'e, a-winkin' at me; "they ain't in season till the

winter though," says 'e. "Not in season," says I. "No," says 'e. "Fruits is in, cats is out." "Why, wot do you mean," says I. "Mean," says 'e. "That I'll never be a party to the butchers to keep up the price o' meat," says 'e. "Mr. Weller," says 'e a-squeezing my 'and wery 'ard and vhispering in me ear, "—don't mention this 'ere agin—but it's the seasonin' as does it. They're all made of them noble animals," says 'e, a-pointin' to a wery nice little tabby kitten, "and I seasons 'em for beefsteak, weal or kidney 'cordin' to the demand. And more than that," says 'e, "I can make a weal a beefsteak, or a beefsteak a kidney, or any one of 'em a mutton, at a minute's notice, just as the market changes and appetites wary."

PICKWICK.

He must have been a very ingenious young man that, Sam.

[*He gives a decided shudder.*]

SAM.

Just was, Sir.

[*He continues to empty basket.*]

And the pies was beautiful. Tongue; well, that's a wery good thin' vhen it ain't a woman's. Bread,—knuckle o' ham, reg'lar picter—cold beef in slices, wery good. Wot's in them stone jars, young-touch-and-go?

BOY.

Beer in this one,—hot punch in t'other.

SAM.

And a wery good notion of a lunch it is, take it all together. Now gen'l'm'n "fall on," as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets.

[*It needs no second invitation to induce the party to yield full justice to the meal and as little pressing does it require to induce* SAM, *the long gamekeeper and the two boys to station themselves on the grass at a little distance and do good execution upon a decent portion of the viands.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Sitting on the edge of the barrow.*]

This is delightful,—thoroughly delightful.

WARDLE.

So it is, so it is, old fellow. Come, a glass of punch.

PICKWICK.

With great pleasure.

[*He drinks.*]

Good. Very good. I'll take another. Warming, very warming. Come, gentlemen, a toast.

[*He retains his hold upon the jar.*]

To our friends at Dingley Dell.

TUPMAN AND WINKLE.

[*Speaking together.*]

To our friends at Dingley Dell.

PICKWICK.

Well, that certainly is most capital warm punch.

[*He looks earnestly at the jar.*]

WARDLE.

[*Handing* PICKWICK *a portion of veal pie.*]

Here Sir, I'm sure you'll enjoy this meat pie.

PICKWICK.

Thank you, Sir.

[*He eats.*]

Ah, delicious. Especially so with warm punch, and particularly,—I say particularly as the day is crisp,—very decidedly crisp. TUPMAN, my dear friend, a glash of punch.

TUPMAN.

With the greatest delight.

PICKWICK.

[*Filling* TUPMAN'S *glass and refilling his own which he drinks; and then begins to taste his lips enquiringly.*]

Dear me, dear me, I wonder if there is any orange peel in this punch, because orange peel always disagrees with me.

[*In order to test that fact he takes another drink.*]

No, gentlemen, there is no orange peel in the punch. Therefore I propose a toast to the health of Snodgrass, our absent friend.

[*There are cries of* "SNODGRASS, SNODGRASS."]

And now, gentlemen, I feel myself imperatively, I say imperativelyly, called upon to propose another toasht in honour of the punch compounder, unknown.

[*He rises to his feet, his countenance beaming with the most sunny smiles, laughter playing around his lips and good humoured merriment twinkling in his eyes. The constant succession of glasses has produced considerable effect upon him.*]

WARDLE.

[*Laughing.*]

Come, Pickwick, old fellow, you're not doing justice to the food. Try a slice of this ham.

PICKWICK.

Thank you, Mr. Wardle, Sir, thank you. All very delightful. Very. I wish, I wish I could remember a song which was sung in my infancy. Let me shee now,—how did it go?

[*He raises his finger to beat time to a tune not one single note of which comes through the fog of the punch.*]

No,—that's not it.

[*He tries again without uttering a sound.*]

No, that doesn't sound like it either. Well, well. Perhaps if I have a glass of that excellent punch I shall be able to recall it.

[*He drinks another glass.*]

Yes, gen'lmen this is how it starts.

[*He fails again.*]

Well, never mind. I shall recall it another time. It's a very good song.

[*With which, making a backward sway, he falls into the barrow.*]

WARDLE.

[*Rising, with a loud guffaw.*]

Yes, and very good punch I see. Come, boys, let's be off. Repack the basket, Sam.

SAM.

Right you are, Sir. Out of the vay, young leathers. If you walley my precious life, don't upset me, as the gen'lm'n said to the driver when they was a-carryin' 'im to Tyburn.

WARDLE.

[*To* MARTIN.]

Martin, I think we'd better keep to Sir Geoffrey's land after all. Captain Boldwig is inclined to be belligerent when people trespass on his property.

MARTIN.

I think you're right, Sir. We're certain to scare up a covey in the moorland over yonder.

WARDLE.

[*Peering at* PICKWICK *who is fast asleep in the barrow.*]

Upon my word, our friend's asleep. We're on our way, old fellow. . . . Well, well, let him rest. What do you think, gentlemen, shall Sam wheel his master back to Dingley Dell or shall we leave him here to sleep off the punch until we return later on?

SAM.

If I cover 'im up comfortable and warmlike, Sir, 'e'll be alright 'ere. I'm wery anxious on seein' a bit of shootin'.

WARDLE.

Very well, Sam, you shall come. Boy, untie the dogs and let's be off. Now gentlemen watch the dogs and when they make a point get your guns ready and move cautiously. The light won't last much longer.

[*He leads the way out with* TUPMAN *and* WINKLE. MARTIN *and the boys have preceded him.* SAM, *immensely delighted, follows them to the exit and then turns, looks at his master, takes off his greatcoat, runs with it to the barrow and tucks it affectionately about the esteemed little man. And then with an explosion of mirth, turns and hurries after the others.*

Almost immediately one hears voices off left and there enters down stage CAPTAIN BOLDWIG *and his gardener* WILKINS. BOLDWIG *is a little fierce man in a stiff black neckerchief and blue surtout, who, when he condescends to walk about his property, does so in company with a thick rattan stick with*

a brass ferrule, and a gardener with a meek face, to whom he gives his orders with all due grandeur and ferocity.]

BOLDWIG.

Wilkins!

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

Clear this place tomorrow morning,—do you hear, Wilkins?

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

And take care that you keep this place in good order,—do you hear, Wilkins?

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

And remind me to have the board done about trespassers, and spring guns, and all that sort of thing,—to keep the common people out. Do you hear, Wilkins, do you hear?

WILKINS.

I'll not forget it, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

[*Turning left and looking off.*]

I'll see that you don't forget it, Sir.

WILKINS.

[*Catching sight of several pieces of bread which have not been cleared up by* SAM.]

I beg your pardon, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

Well, Wilkins, what's the matter with you?

WILKINS.

I beg your pardon, Sir, but I think there have been trespassers here today.

BOLDWIG.

What!

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir,—they have been dining here, I think, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

Why, Confound their audacity, so they have.

[*He kicks the fragments about.*]

They've actually been devouring their food here. I wish I had the vagabonds under my stick.

[*He waves his stick about.*]

WILKINS.

[*Very timidly.*]

Beg your pardon, Sir, but . . .

BOLDWIG.

But *what!* Eh?

[*He follows* WILKINS' *glance to the wheelbarrow and stalks over to it, administering several pokes to* MR. PICKWICK'S *body with his stick.*]

Who are *you*, you rascal? What's your name?

PICKWICK.

[*Opening one eye with a beaming smile.*]

Hot punch.

BOLDWIG.

What? What did he say his name was?

WILKINS.

Punch, I think, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

[*In a high passion.*]

That's his impudence, that's his confounded impudence. He's only feigning to be asleep now. He's drunk; he's a drunken plebeian. Wheel him away, Wilkins, wheel him away directly.

WILKINS.

[*Very flustered.*]
Where shall I wheel him to, Sir?

BOLDWIG.

[*Shouting at the top of his lungs.*]
Wheel him to the Devil.

WILKINS.

Very well, Sir.
[*He starts to wheel.*]

BOLDWIG.

Stay. That's *my* wheelbarrow. Throw him out of it. Throw him off my grounds.

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir.
[*He dumps* PICKWICK *into the pile of leaves to the right of the broken fence.* PICKWICK *doesn't wake up but lies with a cherubic smile comfortably curled up.*]

BOLDWIG.

He shall not bully me. He shall not bully me. Wilkins!

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

Let's proceed with our rounds. I'm swelling

with indignation. I say that I'm swelling with indignation! Do you hear, Wilkins?

[*He is walking off.*]

WILKINS.

Yes, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

[*Turning explosively upon* WILKINS.]

Do you hear, Wilkins?

WILKINS.

[*With a little stagger.*]

Yes, Sir.

BOLDWIG.

[*Stalking off pompously.*]

Trespassing plebeians. Rascals and vagabonds. What's the world coming to, I should like to know.

WILKINS.

[*Following him off.*]

Yes, Sir.

[*Slowly raising himself to a sitting posture,* PICKWICK *holds up his hand as though to command silence at a banquet. He wears a more beaming smile than ever and there are several dead leaves sticking in his hair.*]

PICKWICK.

Genelmen,—that song comes back to me. It's a sharming little thing. It goes like this.

[*He beats time with his finger.*]

We won't go home till morning
We won't go home till morning
We won't go home till mororning. . .
And so say all of us.

[*He bursts out laughing, calls out "Hooray" and then, as if in bed, he pulls the greatcoat up and snuggles down in the leaves.*]

Lights black out.

Act II.

Scene 3.

[*The evening of Christmas day at Mr. Wardle's house, Manor Farm, Dingley Dell, Kent.*

Before the lights are turned up on the sitting room at Manor Farm, a drop representing the outside wall of the house and the windows of the main room, the sills of which are covered with snow, is seen, and the voices of choir boys are heard in the distance singing the old Christmas carol "The First Noel." The sound comes slowly nearer and nearer, and the boys, in their white choir robes, enter two by two, and range about the window, each one carrying a lighted candle in his hand. Unaccompanied they sing this lovely and moving carol until the end and then, after a pause, commence "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," marching off to this with their

hands in front of their candles to protect the flames. Their voices fade, and when they have stationed themselves at the back of the stage the drop is raised, the room disclosed, and the boys, still singing, are seen through the window against a vague wintry landscape and a bright cold sky pitted with stars.

The large parlour of the Manor House has no other light in it than the stream which falls across the floor through the high arch left, opening into the dining room. Raised by two steps above the level of the floor there is an alcove about 9 ft. wide and 6 ft. deep. There is a door in the centre of this leading to the gardens and on either side of the door a high narrow mullioned window.

Down right there is an enormous stone fireplace, a high chimney piece and a capacious chimney up which you could have driven one of the new patent cabs, wheels and all.

In the centre of the room there hangs a huge bunch of mistletoe and everywhere there are festoons of coloured paper. The pictures have all been decorated with pieces of holly, and every vase, and these are numerous, is stuffed with similar pieces crowded with red berries. There is a spinnet upstage right upon which there is a pile of song music. The fire glows with burning logs.

For a moment or two one continues to hear the boys' voices. There is a burst of laughter from the dining room. Then, from right, appears the annual plum pudding procession. This is led by the butler, carrying a large

knife in one hand and a large fork in the other, followed by SAM WELLER *holding an enormous tray on which a tremendous plum pudding stands on a dish. It is alight with the fumes of brandy, and a large piece of holly is stuck into the top.* MARY, *and two cheery little maids in caps and bibs, bring up the rear, each one carrying a number of hot plates. With the greatest pomp, and a sort of serious amusement, they cross from one side of the room to the other to be received with a loud shout from* WARDLE *of "Three cheers for the plum pudding" which are given loudly by the assembled guests. A moment later the butler, now empty handed, and two of the maids return from the dining room and recross the stage to the kitchen,—the butler with immense dignity and importance and the two maids hand in hand dancing. After a pause and during a burst of laughter and chatter* MARY *emerges with a coquettish grin throwing a glance back into the dining room obviously at* SAM. *She proceeds no further than the spot beneath the mistletoe and stands there waiting to be kissed.*

After a slight pause, PICKWICK, *glowing with good temper and wine, tiptoes from the dining room hoping that he will not be observed, gives an arch look at the maid, whom he measures with his eyes, and then, darting upstage at a footstool, places it close to the giggling girl, mounts it and presses his lips to her cheeck,—as* SAM *comes out and watches him with open mouth.*

He is about to duplicate the process on her other cheek when the archway suddenly fills with the WARDLES *and all their guests, including* TUPMAN, SNODGRASS *and* WINKLE. *They watch* MR. PICKWICK *with suppressed amusement only to explode at the moment when he has one arm round the girl's neck and his lips upon her cheek.*

The explosion, utterly unexpected and undesired, causes him to fall off the stool, and the girl to turn and fly from the room like a bird.

Now, MR. PICKWICK, *in turn, is standing under the mistletoe, looking with a very pleased if somewhat embarrassed countenance on all that is passing around him, when* ARABELLA, *after a little whispering with the other young ladies, makes a sudden dart forward and, putting her arm around* MR. PICKWICK'S *neck, salutes him affectionately on the left cheek; and before* MR. PICKWICK *distinctly knows what is the matter, he is surrounded by the whole body and kissed by every one of them.*

It is a pleasant thing to see MR. PICKWICK *in the centre of the group, now pulled this way and then that, and first kissed on the chin, and then on the nose, and then on the spectacles, and to hear the peals of laughter which are raised on every side; but it is a still more pleasant thing to see* MR. PICKWICK *blinded with a silk handkerchief, going through all the mysteries of blind man's buff with the utmost relish of the game, until, at last, he catches* RACHEL, *who rather*

thrusts herself into his arms. He implants a kiss upon her cheek at which she giggles hysterically, causing MR. PICKWICK *to snatch the handkerchief from his eyes with such a look of horror that there is a howl of general mirth. Everybody rushes at* MR. PICKWICK, *and he is swept into the dining room, while* RACHEL *is taken by* WARDLE, *whose bellows of laughter awaken all the echoes.*

EMILY *has managed to remain under the mistletoe with a cunning simulation of total unselfconsciousness, although she is fully aware that she is being watched most eagerly by* SNODGRASS. *There she remains humming and apparently busy at smoothing out her frock while* SNODGRASS *pumps up enough courage to approach. This he does step by step, and it is when he makes a final dash that she wheels about in great surprise.*]

EMILY.

Lor, Mr. Snodgrass, are you under the delusion that *you're* playing blind man's buff?

[*She takes a backward step.*]

SNODGRASS.

[*Losing all discretion.*]

Oh, Miss Emily—Emily—my love—my dearest love!

EMILY.

[*Drawing herself up but hiding a smile of joy.*]

Sir, I fear the wine has mounted to your head.

SNODGRASS.

[*Holding out his arms.*]

Not the wine of grapes but that of joy and ecstasy at the sight of beauty and loveliness so unclouded and so clear.

EMILY.

Unclouded and clear? I'd have you know that I've barely touched my glass! You must, I assure you, more skilfully choose your words when addressing a young lady who has been well and daintily nurtured,—even on Christmas night.

[*She puts herself deliberately beneath the mistletoe.*]

SNODGRASS.

[*In deadly earnest.*]

Emily, Emily, the hour has struck, when, after these timid and respectful months of glances, innuendoes and silent eloquence it is ordained that I declare my passion at your feet.

[*He goes on one knee, seizes her hand and presses his lips to it.*]

EMILY.

[*Plucking her hand away.*]

Pray be careful, Sir. If my father saw you it is certain he would assume that you are making a proposal of marriage.

SNODGRASS.

[*Still kneeling and kissing the hem of her frock.*]

Nothing on this earth is more certain than that I am.

EMILY.

[*Plucking her frock away which he has tilted up.*]

Sir! This resolves itself into the nature of an assault.

[*She goes swiftly to the spinnet as though for protection.*]

SNODGRASS.

[*Rising and following.*]

Would, oh would that it did—and that I could storm the defences that have held out so long.

[*He tries to take her in his arms.*]

EMILY.

[*Darting round the spinnet.*]

Before I permit you, Sir, or any violent man, to crush my walls and make a prisoner of my heart, Cupid's dart must have found its chink and have pierced the vital spot.

SNODGRASS.

[*Going after her.*]

Emily, my love!

[*At this point* MR. PICKWICK *slips out of the dining room quietly and stands in the*

archway gazing at the young couple with a most benevolent smile. SNODGRASS *hesitates,* PICKWICK *leans forward and gives him a push, and* SNODGRASS *rushes to* EMILY *and gives her a long and tender embrace. Hearing* WARDLE *clear his throat,* PICKWICK *gives a warning cough and the two young couple separate hurriedly as* WARDLE *waddles on.*]

WARDLE.

Joe, Joe,—damn the boy, he's gone to sleep again.

JOE.

[*Starting up from behind a large tub with ferns, eating a piece of pie.*]

No, I ain't, Sir.

WARDLE.

Get Mr. Pickwick's glass from the table,—and mine, Joe, and mine.

JOE.

Yes, Sir.

[*He goes into dining room.*]

PICKWICK.

[*With deep interest.*]

Very extraordinary boy, that. Does he always sleep in this way?

WARDLE.

Sleep! He's always asleep. Goes on errands fast asleep and snores as he waits at table.

PICKWICK.

Bless me, how very odd.

WARDLE.

Ah, odd indeed. I'm proud of that boy,—wouldn't part with him on any account,—he's a natural curiosity.

[*He turns and looks in.*]

Joe! Damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again.

JOE.

[*Coming out with two glasses.*]

Here I am, Sir.

WARDLE.

[*Taking them and giving one to* MR. PICKWICK.]

Here you are.

PICKWICK.

[*Clicking.*]

God bless you, old fellow.

NAZARETH COLLEGE
LIBRARY

WARDLE.

[*Affectionately.*]

Same to you, my boy.

[*He claps him on the back and they go a few steps upstage together. Joe returns to his place behind the tub.*]

[RACHEL *and* TUPMAN *followed by* WINKLE *and* ARABELLA ALLEN, TRUNDLE *and* ISABELLA WARDLE *come from the dining room two by two. The two young couples join* SNODGRASS *and* EMILY WARDLE *round the spinnet as* TUPMAN *and the spinster aunt come down right.*]

TUPMAN.

You'll never know, Miss Rachel, what it was, at one blow, to be deserted by a lovely and fascinating creature and to fall a victim to the artifices of a villain who hid the grin of cunning beneath the mask of friendship.

RACHEL.

Please, Mr. Tupman, I beg you, never to mention that traitor's name again. How I could ever have doubted your sincerity for one single moment I shall never, never, know.

TUPMAN.

[*Clasping her hand.*]

My dear Miss Rachel!

[*Emily laughs rather loudly at one of* WINKLE'S *antics.*]

RACHEL.

Emily my dear,—don't laugh so loud, love.

EMILY.

Lor, Aunt!

RACHEL.

[*To* TUPMAN.]

Young girls have *such* spirits!

TUPMAM.

Oh, they have. It's quite delightful.

RACHEL.

Do *you* think my niece is pretty?

TUPMAN.

[*With a passionate glance.*]

I should,—if her aunt wasn't here.

RACHEL.

Oh, you naughty man! But really, if their complexions were a leetle better, don't you think they would be nice looking girls by candle light?

TUPMAN.

[*Indifferently.*]

Oh yes, I think they would.

RACHEL.

Oh you quiz! I know what you were going to say.

TUPMAN.

What?

RACHEL.

You were going to say that Isabella stoops,—I know you were. You men are such observers. Well, so she does. It can't be denied. And certainly if there is one thing more than another that makes a girl look ugly it's stooping. I often tell her that when she gets a little older she'll be quite frightful. Well, you *are* a quiz.

[TUPMAN *smiles mysteriously.*]

What a sarcastic smile. I declare I'm quite afraid of you.

TUPMAN.

Afraid of me?

RACHEL.

Oh, you can't disguise anything from *me*. I know what that smile means very well.

TUPMAN.

What?

RACHEL.

You mean that you don't think Isabella's stooping is as bad as Emily's boldness. Well, she is bold. You cannot think how wretched it makes me sometimes,—I'm sure I cry about it for hours together.

[*She heaves a deep sigh and shakes her head despondingly.*]

EMILY.

[*To others.*]

I'm sure aunt's talking about us.

ISABELLA.

I'm quite certain of it,—she looks so malicious. Hem! Aunt, dear.

RACHEL.

Yes, my dear love.

ISABELLA.

I'm *so* afraid you'll catch cold, Aunt. Have a silk handkerchief to tie round your dear old head. You really should take care of yourself, —considering your age.

[RACHEL, *very angry, tosses her head and goes up followed by* TUPMAN. *The girls titter, in triumph, whereupon* ARABELLA *and* WINKLE *disconnect themselves from the group and come downstage together.*]

ARABELLA.

A little bird has whispered, Mr. Winkle, you covered yourself with glory yesterday when shooting in the dell.

WINKLE.

[*Waving his hand.*]

Oh yes, oh yes! Born with a gun in my hand!

ARABELLA.

[*Wide-eyed with admiration.*]

Born with a gun in your hand? Dear me, Mr. Winkle, how inconvenient for your nurse!

WINKLE.

Ah, but that good dame, to say nothing of my dear mother, very quickly adapted themselves to my habits of sportsmanship.

ARABELLA.

Oh, Mr. Winkle, how wonderful you are.

WINKLE.

[*Airily.*]

Oh no, not quite.

ARABELLA.

And did you keep any animals when you were a tiny tot?

WINKLE.

Rabbits,—I mean hounds. Bloodhounds and the like.

ARABELLA.

[*With a little scream.*]

Oh, Mr. Winkle.

WINKLE.

I quelled them with a glance.

ARABELLA.

And have you ever been to foreign parts to shoot the big *wild* beasts?

WINKLE.

[*Looking round to see that no one is in earshot.*]

Two years ago in India, when all alone, the jungle parted softly and an enormous lion . . .

[*He draws her upstage and continues his story.*]

PICKWICK.

Winkle,—Winkle, my dear friend.

WINKLE.

[*Turning.*]

Yes, my dear Sir?

PICKWICK.

Now that we are all here, and if our good host will permit me to make the suggestion, it would be pleasant,—and indeed surprising,—to hear the duet that you and Miss Arabella were trying this afternoon.

WARDLE.

[*Heartily.*]

By all means.

EMILY.

[*Clapping her hands.*]

Oh *do*, Mr. Winkle! Arabella . . . darling!

TUPMAN.

[*With heavy sentiment.*]

Sing,—sing about love.

SNODGRASS.

[*Gazing at* EMILY.]

Would that I could do so.

ARABELLA.

[*Wriggling.*]

Oh, Mr. Pickwick, but I've only tried it twice.

WINKLE.

[*Very nervous.*]

The . . . the kicking of a sporting gun rather shakes the voice.

PICKWICK.

No, no, no. We beg. Then, too, as science has recently proved, music, after dinner, soothes the digestion in a very gentle way.

WARDLE.

Conduct the girl to the spinnet Winkle. Go along, my boy.

[*There is a burst of clapping from the assembled company who group themselves to listen in characteristic attitudes during which* WINKLE, *still nervous but extremely pleased, leads the giggling* ARABELLA *to the instrument with great gallantry, on which she proceeds to play.*]

She:

My heart is like a silent lute
Some faithless hand has thrown aside,
Those chords are dumb, those tunes are mute,
That once sent forth a voice of pride.
Yet even o'er the lute neglected
The wind of Heaven will sometimes fly,
And even thus the heart dejected
Will sometimes answer to a sigh,
And even thus the heart dejected
Will sometimes answer to a sigh.

He:

And yet, to feel another's power
May grasp the prize for which I pine,
And others may now pluck the flower
I cherished for this heart of mine.
No more, no more, the hand forsaking
The lute must fall, and shivered lie
In silence, and my heart thus breaking
Responds not even to a sigh,
In silence, and my heart thus breaking
Responds not even to a sigh.

WARDLE.

[*Who is facing the arch.*]

Ah, grandmother.

[*A very old lady in a stiff brocaded gown enters from the dining room.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Offering his arm with great gallantry.*]

Come, Ma'am, we'll show these boys and girls

how to dance properly before they're many minutes older.

[*Three musicians enter and seat themselves upon the raised part,—harp, violin and flute.*]

MRS. WARDLE.

Ah, Mr. Pickwick, young people were very different when I was a girl.

WARDLE.

[*To* PICKWICK.]
You mean to dance!

PICKWICK.

Of course I do. Don't you see I'm dressed for the purpose?

[*He calls attention to his speckled silk stockings and smartly tied pumps,—appearing without his gaiters for the first time within the memory of his oldest friends.*]

TUPMAN.

[*Jocosely, coming down from* RACHEL.]
You—in silk stockings?

PICKWICK.

And why not, Sir,—why not?

TUPMAN.

Oh, of course there's no reason why you shouldn't wear them.

PICKWICK.

I imagine not, Sir, I imagine not.

TUPMAN.

[*Gazing at the stockings.*]

They're a very pretty pattern.

PICKWICK.

I hope they are. You see nothing extraordinary in the stockings *as* stockings, I trust, Sir?

TUPMAN.

Certainly not, oh certainly not.

WARDLE.

[*Clapping his hands.*]

Now, boys and girls, take your places for Sir Roger. Strike up, musicians.

[*The whole company arranges itself for* SIR ROGER DE COVERLY *as the instruments commence to play the well known tune.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Stationing himself with the old lady at the top of the dance.*]

We are all ready, I believe.

WARDLE.

Then go.

[*At the moment when the orchestra commences to play the servants run on from the kitchen. The butler, as is the custom, on Christmas night, gives his arm to* MISS RACHEL, MARY *and* SAM *take their places together and* WARDLE *pairs off with one of the maids, the other taking her place with one of the young gentlemen.* SNODGRASS *is with* EMILY, WINKLE *with* ARABELLA, ISABELLA *with* TRUNDLE.

Off goes MR. PICKWICK *into hands across and down the middle to the very front,—pousette everywhere,—loud stamp on the floor, ready for the next couple, off again,—all the figure over once more,—another stamp to beat out the time,—next couple and the next and the next again,—never was such going!*

As the dance is at its height there is a commotion at the door leading to the kitchen. SAM WELLER, *who has detached himself from the dance a moment before, is heard in protestation.*]

SAM.

No, you don't. What do you want? You can't come in.

JACKSON.

[*Pushing* SAM *aside and coming down.*]

Stop!—in the name of the law.

[*Commotion. Sensation. All the dancers draw up in indecision, amazed at this interruption.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Astonished and looking for his spectacles.*]
Mercy on us, what's this?

MANY VOICES.

What is it? What's the matter?

JACKSON.

[*Marching down to* PICKWICK *and handing him a paper.*]
Mr. Pickwick?

PICKWICK.

For me? Where are my spectacles? Here, Tupman, read this, will you?

[*He hands the paper to* TUPMAN.]

WARDLE.

[*Alarmed at the look on* PICKWICK'S *face.*]
Nobody dead, is there? Cease that music.

[*The music ceases.* WINKLE, TUPMAN *and* SNODGRASS *close round* PICKWICK *who, in great astonishment, is still fumbling for his glasses. All the dancers, stirred to great curiosity, surround this group.*]

PICKWICK.

Well, Tupman, well?

TUPMAN.

[*Reading the paper aloud in a trembling voice.*]

"Having been instructed by Mrs. Martha Bardell to commence an action against you for breach of promise of marriage, we beg to inform you that a writ has been issued against you in the Court of Common Pleas. . . ."

[MR. PICKWICK *utters a little cry, staggers, faints, and is caught with the utmost concern and tenderness by* WINKLE *and* SNODGRASS, *as* SAM *rushes down and begins to pat* MR. PICKWICK'S *hand with deep affection.*]

CURTAIN.

Act III.

Scene 1.

[*The scene is laid in* Mr. Pickwick's *living room at* Mrs. Bardell's (*the same scene as in Act II.*) *It is the evening of a few days later.*

Mrs. Bardell *is entertaining two of her most particular acquaintances,*—Mrs. Sanders *and* Mrs. Cluppins,—*who have just stepped in for a little supper consisting of pettitoes, toasted cheese and tea. The cheese is simmering and browning away most delightfully in a little Dutch oven before the fire; the pettitoes are getting on deliciously in a little tin saucepan on the hob; and* Mrs. Bardell *and her two friends are getting on very well also in a little quiet conversation about and concerning all their particular friends and acquaintances.*

On rise of curtain Mrs. Cluppins, *a little busy looking woman, is seated at the table centre, buttering a piece of bread, and* Mrs. Sanders *opposite, a big, fat, heavy-faced personage, is stirring her tea with a heavy hand.* Mrs. Bardell *is bending over the Dutch oven in order to watch the cheese. There is an atmosphere of complete peace and self satisfaction in the room.*]

MRS. SANDERS.

As I always says, Mrs. Cluppins, a cupper tea at this hour is a very good thing for the constitootion.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

And so it is, Mrs. Sanders. Better nor a tot of gin, I says, and if the truth must be told a little cheaper too.

MRS. BARDELL.

But they both 'as their places, my dears. Without tea and gin where would poor women be?

MRS. SANDERS.

Where, indeed?

MRS. CLUPPINS.

You're right.

[*There is a sudden crash on the door.*]

MRS. SANDERS.

[*Starting violently.*]

Lauks a'mussey.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Well, I never did.

MRS. BARDELL.

Oo's there, for any sake?

[*Master* TOMMY BARDELL *flings open the door.*]

TOMMY.

[*In a high pitched voice.*]

Mr. Pickwick's servant's at the door and wants to speak with you.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Aghast.*]

Mr. Pickwick's servant!

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Bless my soul.

MRS. SANDERS.

Well, I raly would not ha' believed it unless I'd happened to ha' been 'ere.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Greatly agitated,—wobbling to the table.*]

Mrs. Cluppins,—Mrs. Sanders, what *shall* I do? Should I ought to see him? I wish Mr. Dodson and Fogg was here.

[*She seizes hold of* TOMMY *who has been drawn to the table by the comfortable smell of food.*]

Tommy, why did you open the door?

[*She thumps the boy soundly causing him to emit a howl of pain.*]

Hold your noise,—do,—you naughty creetur.

MRS. SANDERS.

Yes,—don't worrit your poor mother.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

She's quite enough to worrit her as it is without you, Tommy.

[MASTER BARDELL *utters a piercing scream and runs violently without moving an inch.*]

MRS. BARDELL.

What *shall* I do?

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Well, I think you ought to see 'im. But on no account without a witness.

MRS. SANDERS.

[*Bursting with curiosity.*]

I think two witnesses would be more lawful.

MRS. BARDELL.

Praps he'd better come in.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

To be sure.

[*She jumps up, hurries to door left and calls out.*]

Walk in, young man, and shut the street door first, please.

MRS. SANDERS.

Mr. Pickwick's servant! You could ha' knocked me down with a whisper!

MRS. BARDELL.

I'd better take the cheese off or else it will become like leather.

[SAM WELLER *appears at the door with his usual impudent grin.*]

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Ah.

SAM.

Wery sorry to occasion any personal inconwevience, Ma'am, as the housebreaker said to the old lady when he put her on the fire; but as me and my gov'nor's only just come to town it can't be 'elped, yer see.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Much struck by* SAM'S *appearance and conversation.*]

Of course the young man can't 'elp the faults of 'is master.

MRS. SANDERS.

Certainly not.

SAM.

[*Coming down.*]

So all I've come about is jest this 'ere. First, to give my gov'nor's notice,—there it is.

[*He flings it on the table.*]

Secondly to pay the rent,—here it is. Thirdly, to say as all his things is to be put

together and give to anybody as we sends for 'em. Fourthly, that you may let the place as soon as you like,—and that's all.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Through rising tears.*]

Whatever as 'appened I always 'ave said and always will say that in every respect but one Mr. Pickwick 'as always be'aved 'imself like a perfect gentleman. 'is money always was as good as the bank, always.

[*She applies her handkerchief to her eyes.*]

I'll get the receipt directly.

[*She sobs loudly and goes off left.*]

[*There follows a slight pause during which* MASTER BARDELL, *as though stalking game, sneaks down behind* SAM WELLER *and kicks him hard on the calf. Turning with a laugh* SAM *goes through the motions of a prize-fighter and gives the boy a smart smack on the face which causes him to utter a shriller yell than usual and bolt from the room.*]

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*In a broken voice.*]

Poor dear.

MRS. SANDERS.

Ah, poor thing.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

I rally cannot contain myself when I think of such perjury. I don't wish to say nuttink

to make you uncomfortable, young man, but your master's an old brute and I wish I 'ad 'im 'ere to tell 'im so.

SAM.

I wish you 'ad.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Glancing anxiously at the Dutch oven.*]

To see 'ow dreadful she takes on, goin' mopin' about and takin no pleasure in nothin', except when her friends comes in, out o' charity, to sit with 'er and make 'er comfortable. It's shocking, shocking.

MRS. SANDERS.

Barbarous! An' she, a poor 'elpless widder, ever since 'er man was knocked on the 'ead with a quart pot in a public 'ouse cellar!

MRS. CLUPPINS.

And your master, young man! A gentleman with money, as could never feel the expense of a wife, no more than anything,—why, there ain't the faintest shade of an excuse for 'is be'aviour. Why don't 'e marry 'er?

SAM.

Ah, to be sure, that's the question.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Question indeed! *She'd* question 'im if she'd *my* spirit. Hows'ever there is a law for us

women,—mis'rable creeturs as they'd make us if they could; and that your master will find out, young man, to his cost, afore e's much older.

[*At this consolatory reflection* MRS. CLUPPINS *bridles up and smiles at* MRS. SANDERS *who smiles back again.*]

MRS. SANDERS.

In fact, he'll find it out termorrer when 'e trembles like a jelly under the Judge's h'eagle h'eye!

SAM.

I'll see you there, I 'opes.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

We wouldn't miss it, Mr. Weller, not if the H'angel Gabriel blew a blast upon 'is 'orn!

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Entering.*]

'ere's the receipt, Mr. Weller, and 'ere's the change. And I 'ope you'll take a little something to keep the cold out, if it's only for old acquaintance sake, Mr. Weller.

SAM.

Thankee, Ma'am. I don't mind if I do.

[MRS. BARDELL, *to the very obvious delight of the two other ladies, goes up to a small closet above door at left and produces a black bottle and four wine glasses. So*

great is her abstraction, in her deep mental affliction, that, after filling MR. WELLER'S *glass she fills the others too.*]

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Lauk, Mrs. Bardell, see what you've been and done.

MRS. SANDERS.

Well, that *is* a good one.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Tremulously.*]
Ah, my poor 'ead.

SAM.

Vell, I never can drink afore supper unless a *lady* drinks with me.

[*All the ladies laugh.*]

MRS. SANDERS.

That being the case, Mr. Weller, I'll take a slight sip out of my glass.

SAM.

Ah, but you must all take a slight sip.

[*They all do take a slight sip, with much gusto.*]

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Let's drink a toast. Success to Bardell agin Pickwick.

MRS. SANDERS.

'ere, 'ere.

MRS. BARDELL.

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

[*The three ladies empty their glasses in honour of the sentiment.* MRS. SANDERS *chokes violently and* SAM, *with great gallantry, smacks her on the back. During this slight disturbance,* MRS. CLUPPINS *seizes the opportunity to refill her glass from the black bottle.*]

MRS. BARDELL.

I suppose you've 'eard what's goin' forward, Mr. Weller?

SAM.

I've eerd somthin' on it.

MRS. BARDELL.

It's a terrible thing to be dragged before the public in this way, Mr. Weller; but I see now, that it's the only thing I ought to do, and my lawyers, Mr. Dodson and Fogg, tell me, that with the evidence we shall call, we *must* succeed. I don't know what I should do, Mr. Weller, if I didn't.

[*The mere idea of* MRS. BARDELL *failing in her action affects* MRS. SANDERS *so deeply that she is under the necessity of refilling and re-emptying her glass immediately.*]

MRS. SANDERS.

Lor, Mrs. Bardell! If I 'adn't had the presence of mind to do that I must 'ave dropped.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Won't Mr. Dodson and Fogg be wild if the plaintive shouldn't get it, when they're adoin' of it all on speculation too?

MRS. SANDERS.

Ah, won't they so.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

But the plaintive musta get it.

MRS. BARDELL.

I 'ope so, oh, I 'ope so.

MRS. SANDERS.

There can't be any doubt about it, dear.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Producing a letter proudly.*]

My lawyers, Mr. Dodson and Fogg, says as 'ow I *shall* get it.

[*She reads.*]

An action brought against Mr. Samuel Pickwick for damages sustained by reason of a breach of promise of marriage shall be publicly tried in the Court of Common Pleas; the plaintive having all the advantages derivable not

only from the force of circumstances but also from the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg.

SAM.

[*Setting down his glass.*]

Vell, all I can say is that I vish you *may* get it.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Fervently.*]

Thankee, Mr. Weller.

SAM.

And of them Dodson and Foggs as does these sort o' thing on spec; as well as for the other kind and gen'rous people o' the same perfession as sets people by the ears free gratis for nothing, and sets their clerks to work to find out little disputes among their neighbours and acquaintances as vonts settlin' by means o' law suit,—all I says o' them is that I vish they 'ad the revard *I'd* give 'em.

MRS. BARDELL.

Ah, I wish they 'ad the reward that every kind and generous 'eart would be inclined to bestow upon them.

SAM.

Amen to that, and a fat and 'appy livin' they'd get out o' it! Good night, ladies.

ALL.

Good night, Mr. Weller.

[MR. WELLER *picks up his hat, puts it on, taps the top of it and swaggers off.* MRS. BARDELL, *saying "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear" goes back to the Dutch stove to attend to the cheese again. When her back is turned* MRS. SANDERS *picks up the black bottle, makes a sign to* MRS. CLUPPINS *to hold out her glass, fills it, fills her own and then, after a surreptitious glance at* MRS. BARDELL, *clicks her crony's glass very gently in order that the sound shall not be heard and the two old ladies drink.* MRS. BARDELL, *upon whom all this has passed unnoticed, heaves a profound sigh and permits a sob to escape.*]

LIGHTS BLACK OUT.

ACT III.

Scene 2.

[*A court room at Guildhall, in the Court of Common Pleas, some weeks later.*

It is a large square room in which there are several rows of long benches with desks in front of them. At left there is the Judge's bench and below this the chair of the Clerk of the Court and a small table. The witness box faces the audience and the jurybox; down stage over the footlights, is filled with jurymen who sit with their backs to the audience in two rows.

On the front bench, facing the judge, MR. PICKWICK *is discovered seated with* MR. PERKER. *Beyond* PERKER *there are seated* MESSRS. DODSON *and* FOGG *with their client* MRS. BARDELL *and her two friends* MRS. CLUPPINS *and* MRS. SANDERS. MASTER BARDELL *sits at his mother's feet gazing open mouthed at the judge.*

On the second row there are SERGEANT BUZFUZ *behind whom sit* SERGEANT SNUBBIN, MR. PHUNKY *and* MR. SKIMPIN,—*attorneys in the case. The remainder of the seats are filled by* TUPMAN, SNODGRASS, WINKLE, *the onlookers, other lawyers and* SAM WELLER. TONY WELLER *is at the back of the Court.*

On rise of curtain MR. JUSTICE STARELEIGH, *a most particularly short man, and so fat that he seems all face and waistcoat, rolls in from behind his dais and, having bobbed gravely at the Bar, who rise and bob gravely to him, puts his little legs underneath his table and his little three-cornered hat upon it and sits pulling his robes about him and straightening a comical looking wig.*

An officer on the floor of the Court (the gentleman in black) calls out "Silence," upon which another officer cries "Silence" in an angry manner and three or four more ushers call "Silence" in a voice of indignant remonstrance.]

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

Bardell and Pickwick.

BUZFUZ.

[*A very majestic person of enormous weight, with a large fat face, frowning and cloudy, rises immediately.*]

I am for the plaintive, my lord.

JUDGE.

Who is with you, brother Buzfuz?

[MR. SKIMPIN *rises, bows and sits.*]

SNUBBIN.

[*Rising.*]

I appear for the defendant, my lord.

JUDGE.

Anybody with you, brother Snubbin?

SNUBBIN.

Mr. Phunky, my lord.

[*He sits.*]

JUDGE.

[*Writing on his pad.*]

Sergeant Buzfuz and Mr. Skimpin for the plaintive,—for the defendant Sergeant Snubbin and Mr. Monkey.

PHUNKY.

Beg your lordship's pardon,—Phunky.

JUDGE.

Oh, very good, I never had the pleasure of hearing the gentleman's name before.

[PHUNKY *bows and smiles, and the Judge bows and smiles; whereupon* MR. PHUNKY *sits looking very self-conscious.*]

JUDGE.

Go on.

[*Loud cries of "Silence" from all the ushers.*]

SKIMPIN.

My lord, this is an action instituted by Mrs. Martha Bardell against Mr. Samuel Pickwick in which the damages are laid at fifteen hundred pounds.

[*He sits.*]

BUZFUZ.

My lord and gentlemen of the jury, you have heard from my learned friend a statement as to the nature of this case, but you have *not* heard from him, inasmuch as it does not come within his province to tell you, what are the facts and circumstances of the same. Those facts and circumstances, gentlemen, you shall hear detailed by me and proved by the unimpeachable female whom I represent.

[*He bends forward and whispers to* DODSON *and* FOGG, *then pulls his gown over his shoulders, settles his wig and commences his address.*]

SERGEANT BUZFUZ

Never, from the very first moment of applying myself to the practice of law, *never*, in the whole course of my professional experience have I approached a case with feelings of such deep emotion or with such a heavy sense of responsibility imposed upon me,—a responsibility, I would say, which I could never be able to support were I not buoyed up and sustained by a conviction so strong that it amounts to positive certainty that the cause of truth and justice, or, in other words, the cause of my much injured and most oppressed client must prevail with the high minded and intelligent dozen of men whom I see in this box before me.

[*A visible effect is produced immediately among the jurymen. Several sit up straight thinking what sharp fellows they must be and others begin to take voluminous notes with the utmost eagerness. The little Judge sits further into his chair thereby making himself more comfortable for a quiet and peaceful nap.*]

BUZFUZ.

[*Speaking in a soft and melancholy voice.*]

The plaintive, gentlemen, is a widow; yes, gentlemen, a widow. The late Mr. Bardell, after enjoying for many years the esteem and confidence of his sovereign as one of the guardians of his royal revenues, glided almost imperceptibly from the world to seek elsewhere for that report and peace which a custom house can never afford.

[*His voice falters.*]

Some time before his death he had stamped his likeness upon a leetle boy. With this leetle boy, the only pledge of her departed exciseman, Mrs. Bardell shrunk from the world and courted the retirement and tranquillity of Goswell Street; and here she placed in her front parlour window a written placard bearing this inscription,—"Apartments furnished for a single gentleman. Enquire within."

A JUROR.

There is no date to that, is there, Sir?

BUZFUZ.

There is no date, gentlemen, but I'm instructed to say that it was put in the plaintive's parlour window just this time three years. I entreat the attention of the jury to the wording of this document. "Apartments furnished for a single *gentleman*." Mrs. Bardell's opinions of the opposite sex, gentlemen, were derived from a long contemplation of the inestimable qualities of her lost husband. She had no fear, she had no distrust, she had no suspicion,—all was confidence and reliance. "Mr. Bardell," said the widow, "Mr. Bardell was a man of honour, Mr. Bardell was a man of his word, Mr. Bardell was no deceiver. Mr. Bardell was once a single gentleman himself; *to* single gentlemen I look for protection, for assistance, for comfort, and for consolation; *in* single gentlemen then I shall perpetually see something to remind me of what Mr. Bardell was when he first won my young and untried affections; *to*

a single gentleman then shall my lodgings be let." Actuated by this beautiful and touching impulse,—among the best impulses of our imperfect nature, gentlemen,—the lonely and desolate widow dried her tears, furnished her first floor, caught the innocent boy to her maternal bosom, and put the bill up in her parlour window. Did it remain there long? No! The serpent was on the watch, the train was laid, the mine was preparing, the sapper and miner was at work. Before the bill had been in the window three days,—three days, gentlemen,—a Being, erect on two legs and bearing all the outward semblance of a man and not of a monster, knocked on the door of Mrs. Bardell's house. He enquired within; he took the lodgings; and on the very next day he entered into possession of them. This man was *Pickwick*,—*Pickwick* the defendant.

[*Having proceeded with such volubility that his face is perfectly crimson,* BUZFUZ *pauses for breath. The silence awakens* MR. JUSTICE STARELEIGH *who immediately writes down something with a pen without any ink in it, and looks unusually profound to impress the jury with the belief that he always thinks most deeply when his eyes are shut.*]

BUZFUZ.

Of this man Pickwick I will say little; the subject presents but few attractions; and I, gentlemen, am not the man, nor are you, gentlemen, the men to delight in the contempla-

tion of revolting heartlessness and of systematic villainy.

[MR. PICKWICK *who has been writing in silence for some time gives a violent start as if some vague idea of assaulting* SERGEANT BUZFUZ *in the august presence of justice and law suggests itself to his mind. An admonitory gesture from* PERKER *restrains him and he listens to the learned gentleman's continuation with a look of indignation which contrasts forcibly with the admiring faces of* MRS. CLUPPINS *and* MRS. SANDERS.]

BUZFUZ.

I say systematic villainy, gentlemen.

[*Looking through* PICKWICK *and talking at him.*]

And when I say systematic villainy let me tell the defendant Pickwick, if he be in Court, as I am informed he is, that it would have been more decent of him, more becoming, in better judgment, and in better taste, if he had stopped away. Let me tell him, gentlemen, that any gesture of dissent or disapprobation in which he may indulge in this Court, will not go down with you; that you will know how to value and how to appreciate them; and let me tell him further, as my lord will tell you, gentlemen, that a Counsel in the discharge of his duty to his client is neither to be intimidated, nor bullied, nor put down; and that any attempt to do either the one or the other, or the first, or the last, will recoil on the head of the attempter be he plaintive or be he defendant, be his name

Pickwick, or Noakes, or Stokes, or Stiles, or Brown or Thompson.

[*This little divergence from the subject in hand has, of course, the intended effect of turning all eyes to* MR. PICKWICK.]

BUZFUZ.

I shall show you, gentlemen, that for two years Pickwick continued to reside constantly and without interruption or intermission at Mrs. Bardell's house. I can prove to you, gentlemen, that about a year ago Pickwick suddenly began to absent himself from home during long intervals, as if with the intention of breaking off with my client; but I shall show you also that his resolution was not at that time sufficiently strong, or that his better feelings conquered, if better feelings he has or that the charms and accomplishments of my client prevailed against his unmanly intentions; by proving to you, that on one occasion, when he returned from the country, he distinctly, and *in terms*, offered her marriage; previously, however, taking special care that there should be no witness to their solemn contract; and I am in a situation to prove to you, on the testimony of his own friends,—most unwilling witnesses, gentlemen,—most unwilling witnesses,—that on that morning he was discovered by them holding the plaintive in his arms and soothing her agitation by his caresses and endearments (a visible impression is produced upon the auditors whereupon he draws forth two very small scraps of paper). And now gentlemen,—but one word

more. Two letters have passed between these parties,—letters which are admitted to be in the handwriting of the defendant and which speak volumes indeed. These letters, too, bespeak the character of the man. They are not open, fervent, eloquent epistles breathing nothing but the language of affectionate attachment. They are covert, sly, underhanded communications, but, fortunately, far more conclusive than if couched in the most glowing language and the most poetic imagery,—letters which must be viewed with a cautious and suspicious eye,—letters which were evidently intended at the time, by Pickwick, to mislead and delude any third parties into whose hands they might fall. Let me read the first; "Garraways, 12 o'clock. Dear Mrs. B,—chops and tomato sauce. Yours Pickwick." . . . Gentlemen, what does this mean? Chops and tomato sauce. Yours Pickwick! Chops. Gracious heavens! And tomato sauce! . . . Gentlemen, is the happiness of the sensitive and confiding female to be trifled away by such shallow artifices as these? The next has no date whatever, which is in itself suspicious. "Dear Mrs. B. I shall not be at home till tomorrow. Slow coach." And then follows this very remarkable expression. "Don't trouble yourself about the warming pan." The warming pan! Why, gentlemen, who *does* trouble himself about a warming pan? When was the peace of mind of man or woman broken or disturbed by a warming pan, which is in itself a harmless, a useful, and I will add, gentlemen, a comforting article of domestic furniture. Why is Mrs. Bardell so earnestly

entreated not to agitate herself about this warming pan, unless, as is no doubt the case, it is a mere cover for a hidden fire,—a mere substitute for some endearing word or promise, agreeably to a preconcerted system of correspondence artfully contrived by Pickwick with a view to his contemplated desertion, and which I am not in a condition to explain. And what does this allusion to the slow coach mean? For ought I know it may be a reference to Pickwick himself, who has most unquestionably been a criminally slow coach during the whole of this transaction, but whose speed will now be very unexpectedly accelerated, and whose wheels, gentlemen, as he will find to his cost, will very soon be greased by you.

[*He pauses for a moment and looks about him with a conceited smile.*]

But enough of this, gentlemen; it is difficult to smile with an aching heart; it is ill jesting when our deepest sympathies are awakened. My client's hopes and prospects are ruined. All is gloom and silence in that house; even the voice of the cheeild is hushed. But Pickwick, gentlemen, Pickwick, the ruthless destroyer of this domestic oasis in the desert of Goswell Street,—Pickwick, who has choked up the well and thrown ashes on the sward,—Pickwick, who comes before you today with his heartless tomato sauce and warming pans,—Pickwick still rears his head with unblushing effrontery and gazes without a sigh upon the ruin he has made. Damages, gentlemen,—heavy damages, is the only punishment with

which you can visit him; the only recompense you can award to my client. And for those damages she now appeals to an enlightened, a high minded, a right feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathizing, a contemplative jury of her civilized countrymen.

[*He draws in a deep breath and then says in a low mysterious voice.*]

Call Elizabeth Cluppins.

[SERGEANT BUZFUZ *falls into his seat mopping his face and neck with a large red handkerchief.* MR. JUSTICE STARELEIGH *wakes up and there is a buzz all over the Court, especially among the people on the front bench.*]

FIRST USHER.

Elizabeth Cluppins.

SECOND USHER.

Elizabeth Jupkins.

THIRD USHER.

Elizabeth Muffins.

[MRS. CLUPPINS, *with the combined assistance of* MRS. BARDELL *and* MRS. SANDERS, MR. DODSON *and* MR. FOGG, *is hoisted into the witness box; and when she is safely perched on the top step,* MRS. BARDELL *stands on the bottom with her pocket handkerchief and pattens in one hand and a glass bottle in the other, ready for any emergency.* MRS. SANDERS, *whose eyes are*

intently fixed on the Judge plants herself close by with a large umbrella.]

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

Silence.

SECOND USHER.

Silence.

THIRD USHER.

Silence.

BUZFUZ.

Mrs. Cluppins, pray compose yourself Ma'am.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Sobbing with increased vehemence.*]

Oh sir, my feelings is one too many for me.

BUZFUZ.

Do you recollect, Mrs. Cluppins, being in Mrs. Bardell's back, one pair of stairs, on one particular morning when she was dusting Pickwick's apartment?

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Blowing her nose loudly.*]

Yes, my lord and jury, I do.

BUZFUZ.

Mr. Pickwick's sitting room was the first floor front, I believe.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Yes, it were, Sir.

BUZFUZ.

What were you doing in the back room, Ma'am?

MRS. CLUPPINS.

My lord and jury I will not deceive you.

JUDGE.

You had better not, Ma'am.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

I was there unbeknown to Mrs. Bardell; I had been out with a little basket, gentlemen, to buy three pounds o' red kidney purtaties which was three pound tuppence a'penny, when I see Mrs. Bardell's street door on the jar.

JUDGE.

On the what?

SNUBBIN.

[*Rising.*]
Partly open, my lord.

JUDGE.

[*With a cunning look.*]
She said on the jar.

SNUBBIN.

It's all the same, my lord.

JUDGE.

[*Very doubtful.*]

Um,—I'll make a note of it.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

I walked in, gentlemen, just to say good mornin'; and went in a permiscuous manner upstairs and into the back room. Gentlemen, there was a sound of voices in the front room, and—

BUZFUZ.

And you listened, I believe, Mrs. Cluppins.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Majestically.*]

Begging your pardon, Sir, I would scorn the h'action. The voices was very loud, Sir, and forced themselves upon me h'ear.

BUZFUZ.

Well, Mrs. Cluppins, you were not listening but you heard the voices. Was one of those voices Pickwick's?

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Emphatically.*]

Yes, it were, Sir.

BUZFUZ.

What did he say?

MRS. CLUPPINS.

Well, Sir, he said as 'ow he 'ad in his heye a wery saving and careful person with a great deal of sharpness which would be of use to 'im, and that 'e 'ad made up 'is mind. That she would 'ave someone to sit with 'er in 'er loneliness, and that 'er little boy too would 'ave a lively companion.

[BUZFUZ *smiles and sits down, waving his hand as much as to say "Why go on."* DODSON *and* FOGG *both look round, nodding and smiling. The Judge makes notes with a pen which has no ink.* PICKWICK *shows great indignation but is restrained by* PERKER. MRS. BARDELL *and* MRS. SANDERS *are wreathed in smiles.*]

SNUBBIN.

[*Rising.*]

My lord, I shall not cross-examine the witness; and Mr. Pickwick wishes me to state that her account is in substance correct.

MRS. CLUPPINS.

[*Encouraged.*]

An' Sir, I know as 'ow Mrs. Bardell felt, for I'm the mother of eight children at the present speaking and I hentertains confident hexpectations of presenting Mr. Cluppins with a ninth somewhere this day six months.

JUDGE.

[*Sternly.*]

That will do, Mrs. Cluppins.

[*The worthy lady leaves the box extremely pleased with herself and is conducted back to her seat by* MRS. BARDELL *and* MRS. SANDERS.]

SKIMPIN.

[*Rising.*]

Nathaniel Winkle.

WINKLE.

[*From his place in the Court, in a weak voice.*]

Here.

[*He rises, enters the witness box and bows to the Judge with considerable deference.*]

JUDGE.

[*Sharply.*]

Don't look at me, Sir. Look at the jury.

SKIMPIN.

[*Anxious to confuse him.*]

Now Sir, have the goodness to let his lordship and the jury know what your name is, will you?

WINKLE.

[*Nervously.*]

Winkle.

JUDGE.

[*Angrily.*]
What's your Christian name, Sir?

WINKLE.

Nathaniel, Sir.

JUDGE.

Daniel. Any other name?

WINKLE.

Nathaniel, Sir,—my lord, I mean.

JUDGE.

Nathaniel Daniel, or Daniel Nathaniel?

WINKLE.

No, my lord, only Nathaniel; not Daniel at all.

JUDGE.

What did you tell me it was Daniel for then, Sir.

WINKLE.

I didn't, my lord.

JUDGE.

[*With a heavy frown.*]
You did, Sir. How could I have got Daniel on my notes unless you told me so, Sir.

SKIMPIN.

[*Interposing.*]

Mr. Winkle has rather a short memory, my lord. We shall find means to refresh it before we have quite done with him, I dare say.

JUDGE.

[*With a sinister look at* WINKLE.]

You had better be careful, Sir.

[*Poor* WINKLE *bows and endeavours to feign an easiness of manner which, in his state of confusion, gives him rather the air of a disconcerted pickpocket.*]

SKIMPIN.

Now, Mr. Winkle, attend to me if you please, Sir, and let me recommend you, for your own sake, to bear in mind his lordship's injunction to be careful. I believe you are a particular friend of Mr. Pickwick, the defendant, are you not?

WINKLE.

I have known Mr. Pickwick now, as well as I recollect at this monent, nearly—

SKIMPIN.

Pray, Mr. Winkle, do not evade the question. Are you, or are you not, a particular friend of the defendant's?

WINKLE.

I was just about to say that—

SKIMPIN.

[*Bullying.*]

Will you, or will you not, answer my question, Sir?

JUDGE.

If you don't answer the question you'll be committed, Sir.

SKIMPIN.

Come, Sir,—yes or no, if you please.

WINKLE.

Yes, I am.

SKIMPIN.

Yes, you are. And why couldn't you say that at once, Sir? Perhaps you know the plaintive too? Eh, Mr. Winkle?

WINKLE.

I don't know her; I've seen her.

SKIMPIN.

Oh, you don't know her but you've seen her? Now, have the goodness to tell the gentlemen of the jury what you mean by that, Mr. Winkle.

WINKLE.

I mean that I am not intimate with her, but I have seen her when I went to call on Mr. Pickwick in Goswell Street.

SKIMPIN.

How often have you seen her, Sir?

WINKLE.

How often?

SKIMPIN.

[*Frowning.*]

Yes, Mr. Winkle, how often? I'll repeat the question for you a dozen times if you require it, Sir.

[*He places his hands on his hips and smiles suspiciously at the jury.*]

WINKLE.

It is quite impossible for me to say, Sir, how many times.

SKIMPIN.

Have you seen her twenty times?

WINKLE.

Certainly—more than that.

SKIMPIN.

And you swear you've seen her more than fifty times?

JUDGE.

You had better take care of yourself and mind what you're about.

SKIMPIN.

Pray, Mr. Winkle, do you remember calling on the defendant, Pickwick, at his apartments in the plaintive's house in Goswell Street on one particular morning when you found the plaintive, Mrs. Bardell, in an unusual state?

WINKLE.

[*After hesitation.*]

Yes, I do.

SKIMPIN.

Were you accompanied on that occasion by a friend of the name of Tupman and another of the name of Snodgrass?

WINKLE.

Yes, I was.

SKIMPIN.

Are they here?

WINKLE.

Yes, they are.

[*He looks earnestly towards the spot where his friends are stationed.*]

SKIMPIN.

Pray attend to *me*, Mr. Winkle and never mind your friends. Now Sir, tell the gentlemen of the jury what you saw on entering the defendant's room on this particular morning. Come, out with it, Sir. We must have it sooner or later.

WINKLE.

[*With even greater hesitation.*]

The defendant, Mr. Pickwick, was holding the plaintive in his arms with his hands clasping her waist,—and the plaintive appeared to have fainted away.

SKIMPIN.

Did you hear the defendant *say* anything?

WINKLE.

I heard him call Mrs. Bardell a good creature, and I heard him ask her to compose herself, for what a situation it was, if anybody should come, or words to that effect.

SKIMPIN.

[*Threateningly.*]

Now, Mr. Winkle, I have only one more question to ask you and I beg you to bear in mind his lordship's caution. Will you undertake to swear that Pickwick, the defendant, did not say on the occasion in question "My dear Mrs. Bardell, you're a good creature; compose

yourself to this situation, for to this situation you must come"—or words to that effect.

WINKLE.

I didn't understand him so certainly. I was on the staircase and couldn't hear distinctly. The impression on my mind is—

SKIMPIN.

The gentlemen of the jury want none of the impressions on your mind, Mr. Winkle, which I fear would be of little service to honest, straightforward men. You were on the staircase and didn't distinctly hear; but you will not swear that Mr. Pickwick did not make use of the expressions I have quoted? Do I understand that?

WINKLE.

No, I will not.

SKIMPIN.

Oh.

[*He sits down with a triumphant countenance.*]

PHUNKY.

[*Rising for the purpose of cross-examination.*]

You have told my learned friend that you have known Mr. Pickwick for a long time. Had you ever any reason to suppose or believe that he was about to be married?

WINKLE.

[*Eagerly.*]

Oh no, certainly not.

PHUNKY.

[*Complacently.*]

I will even go further than this, Mr. Winkle. Did you ever see anything in Mr. Pickwick's manner and conduct towards the opposite sex to induce you to believe that he ever contemplated matrimony of late years in any case?

WINKLE.

Oh, no, certainly not.

SKIMPIN.

You have never known anything in his behaviour towards Mrs. Bardell or any other female, in the least degree suspicious?

WINKLE.

N-n-no, except on one trifling occasion which, I have no doubt, might easily be explained.

[PHUNKY *hurriedly sits down in confusion.* SERGEANT SNUBBIN *jumps up immediately.*]

SNUBBIN.

That is all, Sir. You may leave the box.

BUZFUZ.

[*Rising. With a roar.*]

Stay, Mr. Winkle, stay! Will your lordship have the goodness to ask him what this one

instance of suspicious behaviour towards females was?

JUDGE.

You hear what the learned counsel says, Sir. Describe the occasion to which you refer.

WINKLE.

[*Trembling with anxiety.*]

I—I'd rather not.

JUDGE.

Perhaps so,—but you must, Sir.

WINKLE.

[*Faltering.*]

Well, my lord, the trifling circumstance of suspicion was Mr. Pickwick's being found in a lady's sleeping apartment at midnight, which terminated, I believe, in the breaking off of the projected marriage of the lady in question, and led, I know, to the whole party being carried forcibly before George Nupkins Esquire, magistrate and Justice of the Peace, for the borough of Ipswich.

SNUBBIN.

You may leave the box, Sir.

[WINKLE *stumbles from the box and rushes from the Court.* MRS. SANDERS *utters a loud giggle which is instantly suppressed by the gentleman in black with a cry of "Silence."*]

BUZFUZ.

[*Rising, impressively.*]

Call Samuel Weller.

[*It is quite unnecessary to call* SAMUEL WELLER, *for* SAMUEL WELLER *steps briskly into the box the instant his name is pronounced and placing his hat on the floor and his arms on the rail takes a bird's-eye view of the Bar and a comprehensive survey of the Bench with a remarkably cheerful and lively aspect.*]

JUDGE.

What's your name, Sir.

SAM.

Sam Veller, me lord.

JUDGE.

Do you spell it with a "V" or "W"?

SAM.

That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, me lord. I never 'ad occasion to spell it more than once or twice in me life, but I spells it with a "We."

TONY WELLER.

[*From the rear of the Court.*]

Quite right too, Samivel, quite right. Put it down a We, me lord, put it down a We.

JUDGE.

Who is that who dares to address the Court? —Usher!

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

Yes, my lord?

JUDGE.

Bring that person here instantly.

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

Yes, my lord.

JUDGE.

Do you know who that was?

SAM.

I raythe suspect it was me father, me lord.

JUDGE.

Do you see him here now?

SAM.

[*Staring up at the ceiling.*]
No, I don't, me lord.

JUDGE.

If you could have pointed him out I would have committed him instantly.

[SAM *bows and turns with cheerfulness to* SERGEANT BUZFUZ.]

BUZFUZ.

Now, Mr. Weller.

SAM.

Now, Sir.

BUZFUZ.

I believe you are in the service of Mr. Pickwick, the defendant in the case. Speak up if you please, Mr. Weller.

SAM.

I mean to speak up, Sir. I *am* in the service of that 'ere gen'l'man and a wery good service it is.

BUZFUZ.

[*With jocularity.*]

Little to do and plenty to get, I suppose?

SAM.

Oh, quite enough to get, Sir, as the soldier said when they ordered 'im three 'undred and fifty lashes.

JUDGE.

You must not tell us what the soldier or any other man said, Sir; it's not evidence.

SAM.

Wery good, me lord.

BUZFUZ.

Do you recollect anything particular happening on the morning when you were first engaged by the defendant, oh, Mr. Weller?

SAM.

Yes, I do, Sir.

BUZFUZ.

Have the goodness to tell the jury what it was.

SAM.

I 'ad a reglar noo fitout o' clothes that mornin, gen'l'm'n o' the jury, and that was a wery partickler and uncommon circumstance vith me in them days.

[*There is a general laugh in the Court-room and a cry of "Silence."*]

JUDGE.

[*Angrily.*]

You had better be careful, Sir.

SAM.

[*Calmly and serenely.*]

So Mr. Pickwick said at the time, me lord, and I was *wery* careful o' that 'ere suit o' clothes; *wery* careful indeed, me lord.

BUZFUZ.

[*Folding his arms emphatically.*]

Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Weller, that you saw nothing of this fainting on the part of the plaintive in the arms of the defendant, which you have heard described?

SAM.

Cert'nly not. I was in the passage till they called me up and then the old lady was not there.

BUZFUZ.

[*Dipping a large pen into the inkstand before him for the purpose of frightening* SAM.]

Now attend, Mr. Weller. You were in the passage and yet saw nothing of what was going forward. Have you a pair of eyes, Mr. Weller?

SAM.

[*With the most complete simplicity.*]

Yes, I 'ave a pair of eyes and that's jest it. If they wos a pair o' patent double million magnifying gas microscopes of hextra power praps I might be able to see through a flight of stairs and a deal door, but being only eyes, you see, my wision's limited.

[*Spectators titter, the Judge smiles, and* BUZFUZ *looks particularly foolish.*]

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

Silence.

BUZFUZ.

Now Mr. Weller, I'll ask you a question on another point, if you please. Do you recollect going up to Mrs. Bardell's house one night a short time ago?

SAM.

Oh yes, wery well.

BUZFUZ.

Oh, you do remember that, Mr. Weller. I thought we should get at something at last.

SAM.

I raythe thought that too, Sir.

[*The spectators titter again and there is another cry of "Silence"* BUZFUZ *looking knowingly at the jury.*]

BUZFUZ.

Well, I suppose you went up to have a little talk about this trial,—eh, Mr. Weller.

SAM.

I went up to pay the rent, but we did get a talk in about the trial.

BUZFUZ.

[*Brightening up.*]

Oh, you did get a talk in about the trial! Now, what passed about the trial; will you have the goodness to tell us, Mr. Weller?

SAM.

With all the pleasure in life, Sir. Arter a few unimportant obserwations from two wirtuous females the ladies gets into a wery great state o' admiration at the honourable conduct o' Mr. Dodson and Fogg,—them two gen'l'm'n as is setting near you now.

[DODSON *and* FOGG *look as virtuous as possible.*]

BUZFUZ.

The attorneys for the plaintive. Well! They spoke in high praise of the honourable conduct of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, did they?

SAM.

Yes, they said wot a wery gern'ous thing it was on 'em to 'ave taken up the case on spec and to charge nothin' at all for costs unless they gets 'em out of Mr. Pickwick.

[*The spectators titter again and* DODSON *and* FOGG *very confused lean over and whisper to* MR. BUZFUZ.]

BUZFUZ.

[*In affected composure.*]

You are quite right. It's perfectly useless, my lord, attempting to get at any evidence through the impenetrable stupidity of this witness. I will not trouble the Court by asking him any more questions. Stand down, Sir.

SAM.

Would any other gen'l'man like to ask me anythin'?

SNUBBIN.

[*Laughing.*]

Not I, Mr. Weller, thank you.

BUZFUZ.

[*Roaring.*]

You may go down, Sir.

[SAM *goes down, picks up his hat, grins all round, bows to the Judge and returns to his seat.*]

BUZFUZ.

That's my case, my lord.

[*He sits heavily.*]

JUDGE.

Now, brother Snubbin.

SNUBBIN.

[*Rising.*]

My lord and gentlemen of the jury, you have listened, if you were able, to the misleading statements of my extremely windy friend. He has failed utterly and lamentably to undermine the notable benevolence, philanthropy and

philosophical humanity of my client Mr. Pickwick, who, far from being the demon that he has been painted by the counsel for the plaintive. . . .

[*Black out, as the last words fade away, to denote the passing of a quarter of an hour.*]

[*As the lights come up there are orders for silence as before from the three ushers. The members of the jury are standing. The Judge emerges from his room wiping his mouth and* MR. PICKWICK *puts on his spectacles with a shaky hand.*]

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

[*To jury.*]

Gentlemen, are you agreed upon your verdict?

FOREMAN OF JURY.

We are.

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

Do you find for the plaintive, gentlemen, or for the defendant?

FOREMAN.

For the plaintive.

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

With what damages, gentlemen?

FOREMAN.

Seven hundred and fifty pounds.

[*There are exclamations of great joy from the three ladies and from* DODSON *and* FOGG. MR. PICKWICK *flops into his seat supported by* PERKER.]

JUDGE.

The verdict is with you, Brother Buzfuz.

[BUZFUZ *with a beaming face rises and bows.*]

Gentlemen of the jury, I thank you for your admirable services. Dismiss the Court.

[*He rises. Everyone rises. He leaves.*]

GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

The Court is dismissed.

[*There is a loud buzz of conversation and general movement.* MR. PICKWICK *takes off his spectacles, wipes the glasses, and puts them into his case; and then, having drawn on his gloves with great nicety, he rises, turns, and speaks to* DODSON *and* FOGG, *who are still sitting.*]

PICKWICK.

Well, gentlemen?

DODSON.

[*Grinning.*]

Well, Sir.

PICKWICK.

You imagine you'll get your costs, don't you, gentlemen?

FOGG.

We think it rather probable.

DODSON.

[*Rubbing his hands.*]

We'll try, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Vehemently.*]

You may try and try and try again, Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, but not one farthing of costs or damages do you ever get from me if I spend the rest of my existence in a debtor's prison.

DODSON.

[*Laughing.*]

You'll think better of that, Mr. Pickwick.

FOGG.

He, he, he. We'll soon see about that, Mr. Pickwick.

PERKER.

[*Darting forward.*]

But surely, my dear Sir, surely, you don't mean to say, really and seriously now, and irritation apart, that you won't pay these costs and damages.

PICKWICK.

Not one happenny. I shall employ myself as usual until the opposite party have the power of issuing a legal process of execution against me, and if they are vile enough to avail themselves of it, and to arrest my person, I shall yield myself up with perfect cheerfulness and content of heart. I wish you a very good day, Sir.

[*He turns to leave and comes face to face with* MRS. BARDELL, MRS. CLUPPINS *and* MRS. SANDERS *and* MASTER BARDELL, *who have all been trying to listen to the conversation. The three women turn up their noses at* MR. PICKWICK *who, much disconcerted and confused, attempts to pass. He moves right and so do they. He moves left and so do they; and this process is repeated several times; whereupon the boy utters a prolonged howl and falls in front of* PICKWICK, *who putting his left hand under his coat tails, steps over the boy with superb dignity, meets* SAM, *puts his hand on his faithful servant's shoulder and marches to the door.*]

LIGHTS BLACK OUT.

Act III.

Scene 3.

[The Fleet prison some months later.

One sees a sort of corridor with an archway at each end of shabby stonework. There is a narrow door led up to by three steps which leads into one of the better rooms of the prison. It is a small room almost too small to hold a truckle bed, a table and a chair. It has a window which is right centre and at the other side of this the wall goes back several feet and then is carried along to the archway left. In this wall there are two similar doors and two similar windows. These rooms are unoccupied.

A patch of sunshine falls on the angle centre, and, in this, various inmates of the prison have congregated with a sort of pathetic desire to make the most of the little sun which percolates into this sad and depressing building. There are wooden benches here, and upon one a very decrepid old man is seated with his eyes rivetted on the floor and his face settled into an expression of the deepest and most hopeless despair. A young girl,—probably his granddaughter,—is hanging about him endeavouring with a thousand childish devices to engage his attention; but the old man neither sees nor hears.

There are two or three other men leaning against the wall holding their faces up to the sun.

Hunched up on the corner of the bench, with his back to us, in tattered garments and without a coat, his common calico shirt yellow and in rags; his hair hanging over his face; his features changed with suffering and pinched with famine, is our old friend ALFRED JINGLE. *His head rests on his hand and his whole appearance denotes misery and dejection. Striding about the corridor is a strong built countryman, flicking with a worn out hunting whip the top boot that adorns his right foot; his left is thrust into an old slipper. Horses, dogs and drink have brought him pell-mell. There is a rusty spur on the solitary boot which he occasionally jerks into the empty air, at the same time giving the boot a smart blow and muttering some of the sounds by which a sportsman encourages his horse; "Woa, lass, woa. Steady now, steady."*

There is a lean and haggard woman who is watering, with great solicitude, the wretched stump of a dried-up withered plant which is standing on the window sill left.

During this process one hears the sound, which is carried over the wall from the street of the lavender cry,—"Who'll buy my sweet lavender, twelve branches a pennai," and as this drifts in, the woman raises her face and listens, and all over her sad countenance there is an expression of eager and wistful longing for freedom and the countryside.

A few moments after the rise of the curtain one hears a loud and husky voice; and MR. ROKER, *the turnkey, enters through the archway right. At the first sound of his voice the*

farmer and the other three men turn and make a hurried exit left.]

ROKER.

[*Indicating the door of the room right.*] Here's yer new room, Mr. Pickwick, and a capital one it is. It'll stand you in a pound a week. I suppose you don't mind that?

[*He mounts the steps, unlocks the door with a large and rusty key and throws it open.*

Enter MR. PICKWICK *followed by* SAM WELLER. MR. PICKWICK'S *coat, though rather shabby, is clean and well brushed. His usually rubicund face is a little pale now and all about him there is a listless air.* SAM *is as cheerful as ever.*]

PICKWICK.

[*In a dull voice.*]
Not at all.

ROKER.

Lord! Why didn't yer say at first that you was willing to come down handsome? There was no need for you to use a chummage ticket all these months. Money is in Fleet Prison just wot money is out of it.

SAM.

[*Going into the room and examining the cot.*]

Is this the bed as you described to be an out-and-outer to sleep in?

ROKER.

That's it,—it ud make anyone go to sleep, that bedstead would, whether they wanted to or not.

SAM.

[*Sarcastically.*]

Yes,—I should think poppies was nothing to it.

ROKER.

[*Taking money from* MR. PICKWICK *and clinking it in his hand.*]

Now, if there's anything more we can do for you, let us know.

[*The haggard woman goes off left.*]

PICKWICK.

Very well.

ROKER.

I wish you good morning, Mr. Pickwick.

[*He goes off right.*]

PICKWICK.

I wish you the same, Sir. . . . Well, Sam.

SAM.

[*Grinning.*]

Well, Sir.

[*Attempting similar cheerfulness.*]
Pretty comfortable now, eh Sam?

SAM.

Pretty vell, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Hesitating.*]
Sam. . . . Listen to what I'm going to say.

SAM.

Cert'nly, Sir. Fire away, Sir.

PICKWICK.

[*Putting his hand on* SAM'S *arm.*]
I have felt from the first, Sam, that this is *not* the place to bring a young man to.

SAM.

Nor an old un', neither, Sir.

PICKWICK.

You're quite right, Sam; but old men may come here through their own heedlessness and unsuspicion; and young men may be brought here by the selfishness of those they serve. It is better for those young men, in every point of view, that they should not remain here. Do you understand me, Sam?

SAM.

Vhy no, Sir. I do not.

PICKWICK.

Try, Sam.

SAM.

Vell, Sir, I think I see your drift, and if I *do* see your drift it's my 'pinion that you're a-comin' of it a great deal too strong,—as the mail coachman said to the snowstorm when it overtook 'im.

PICKWICK.

[*Gently.*]

I see you comprehend me, Sam. Independently of my wish that you should not be idling about a place like this, for years to come, I feel that for a debtor in Fleet Prison to be attended by his manservant is a monstrous absurdity, Sam. . . . For a time you must leave me.

SAM.

Oh, for a time, eh, Sir?

PICKWICK.

Yes, for the time that I remain here. Your wages I shall continue to pay. Any one of my three friends will be happy to take you, were it only out of respect for me. And if I ever *do* leave this place, Sam, I pledge you my word that you shall return to me instantly.

SAM.

[*Loudly.*]

Now I'll tell you what it is, Sir; this 'ere sort of thing won't do at all, so don't let's 'ear no more about it.

PICKWICK.

I am serious and resolved, Sam.

SAM.

You air, air you, Sir? Wery good, Sir, then so am I.

[*He fixes his hat on his head with great precision, turns on his heel, and exits right at a run.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Greatly distressed and puzzled.*]

Sam! . . . Sam! . . . Here!

[MR. PICKWICK *looks after his faithful servant for a moment who doesn't answer or return, and then moves slowly over to the window of his room. The sunlight falls on his face. He hears the chirp of sparrows. He puts his hand on his heart, sighs deeply, and listens to the lavender cry which floats in from the distance. He reaches mechanically for his notebook and is about to make a note when he suddenly realizes his dreadful predicament, lets the notebook fall to the floor and covers his face with his hands.*

The little girl makes a dart for the book, holds it up to MR. PICKWICK *and clutches his hand with her fingers.* MR. PICKWICK *places his hand very gently and tenderly on her head, and then, overcome with sadness and emotion, stumbles up to the steps to his room. He turns at the door as* JINGLE *turns and looks him in the face, and as he recognizes* JINGLE *in this dejected looking figure he remains fixed and immovable.*]

JINGLE.

[*Rising.*]

Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK.

Mr. Alfred Jingle!

JINGLE.

[*With a curious laugh.*]

Queer place—strange thing—serves me right—very.

[*He thrusts his hands into the place where his trouser pockets used to be, drops his chin upon his breast and sinks back on to the bench.*

PICKWICK.

[*Deeply affected at the man's misery.*]

Dear, dear me! . . . I should like to speak to *you*,—in private. Will you step in here for an instant?

JINGLE.

[*Staggering to his feet again.*]

Certainly—can't step far—no danger of overwalking yourself here.

PICKWICK.

You've forgotten your coat.

JINGLE.

Eh?—Spout—dear relation—Uncle Tom—couldn't help it—must eat you know. Wants of nature—and all that.

PICKWICK.

What *do* you mean?

JINGLE.

[*With a sob and a laugh.*]

Gone, my dear Sir—last coat—can't help it—lived on a pair of boots—whole fortnight—silk umbrella—ivory handle—week—fact—honour.

PICKWICK.

[*Horrified.*]

Lived for three weeks upon a pair of boots and a silk umbrella with an ivory handle?

JINGLE.

True—pawnbroker's shop—duplicates here—small sums—mere nothing—all rascals.

PICKWICK.

Oh,—I understand you. You have pawned your wardrobe?

JINGLE.

Everything—all shirts gone—never mind—saves washing. Nothing soon—lie in bed—starve—die—inquest—little bonehouse—poor prisoner—common necessaries—hush it up—gentlemen of the jury—warden's tradesmen—keep it snug—natural death—coroner's order—workhouse funeral—serve him right—all over—drop the curtain.

[JINGLE *delivers this singular summary of his prospects in life with his accustomed volubility, with various twitches of the countenance to counterfeit smiles.* MR. PICKWICK *easily perceives that his recklessness is assumed, and looking him full, but not unkindly in the face, sees that his eyes are moist with tears. With a sympathetic gesture,* MR. PICKWICK *holds out his hand to* JINGLE *who presses it warmly and gratefully and turns his head away.*]

JINGLE.

Good fellow—ungrateful dog—boyish to cry—can't help it—bad fever—weak—ill—hungry. Deserved it all—but suffered much—very.

[*Wholly unable to keep up appearances any longer and perhaps rendered worse by the effort he has made the dejected man covers his face with his hands and sobs like a child.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Bending over him, raising him up and helping him to his room.*]

Come, come, my poor fellow, we'll see what can be done when I know all about the matter. Now sit here quietly and tell me about it.

[PICKWICK *closes the door and one sees him through the window continuing his conversation with* JINGLE. *From the arch at left a mild looking little bald headed man emerges carrying a mattress and bedding which he deposits under a narrow deal table which is standing against the wall between two windows left. The old man who is sitting with the little girl's hand on his shoulder looks up and watches the process with interest.*]

OLD MAN.

Will you allow me to inquire why you always make up your bed under that deal table?

BALD HEADED MAN.

Cause I was always used to a fourposter afore I came here, and I find the legs of a table answer just as well.

OLD MAN.

You're a character, Sir.

BALD HEADED MAN.

[*Simply.*]

No,—I haven't got anything of that kind belonging to me.

[*He goes on arranging his bed.*]

JACKSON.

[*Speaking as he comes on from right.*]

Now ladies, here we are. This way.

[MRS. BARDELL *follows him on leading* TOMMY *by the hand. With her are* MRS. CLUPPINS *and* MRS. SANDERS *and finally* ROKER, *the turnkey, who brings up the rear.*]

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Tremulously.*]

What place is this?

JACKSON.

Sunny side, we calls it. Our haristocrats lives here,—them as can pay for better rooms. All right, Roker?

ROKER.

Safe and sound.

JACKSON.

All right and tight Mrs. Bardell.

MRS. BARDELL.

[*Looking about her with horror.*]

I . . . I don't know what you mean, Sir.

JACKSON.

Don't be frightened, Mrs. B. There never was a more delicate man than Dodson, Ma'am, or a more humane man than Fogg. It was their duty in the way of business to take you in execution for them costs; but they was anxious to spare your feelings as much as they could. What a comfort it must be to you to think how it's been done. You'll like the Fleet prison, Ma'am. Everybody does. Wish you good day, Mrs. Bardell. Good day, Tommy. Go with Mr. Roker, Ma'am.

[*He pats* MASTER BARDELL *on the head and goes off right as* ROKER *approaches* MRS. BARDELL *in order to lead her off left. She screams violently and* TOMMY *roars.* MRS. CLUPPINS *and* MRS. SANDERS, *the first saying "Lauks a mercy" and the second "Mercy on us" make off hurriedly as though fearful of remaining.*

MR. PICKWICK *opens his door and stands framed.* MRS. BARDELL *sees him standing there and flops in a dead faint in* ROKER'S *arms.*]

PICKWICK.

Why . . . why is this lady within these walls?

ROKER.

[*Cheerfully.*]

A new prisoner, Mr. Pickwick. Just put in by Dodson and Fogg. Execution on cognovit for costs.

[*He lifts* MRS. BARDELL *up and half carries her off left followed by* TOMMY, *who, still roaring, kicks him in the leg.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Descending the steps, followed after a pause by* JINGLE.]

Dear me, dear me. . . . Well, you will see how your health becomes and think about it meanwhile. Make the statement out for me when you feel yourself equal to the task and I will discuss the subject with you when I have considered it. Now, go to your room. You are tired, and not strong enough to be out long. Food shall be sent to you, Mr. Jingle.

[*Without one spark of his old animation; with nothing even of the dismal gaiety which he had assumed a few moments before,* ALFRED JINGLE *bows low to* MR. PICKWICK *without speaking, although he makes an effort to do so, turns on his heel and creeps slowly off left. With a deeply sympathetic expression* MR. PICKWICK *is still looking after him when* MR. PERKER *hurries in from right.*]

PERKER.

Ah, good morning, Mr. Pickwick, Sir. Important business. Come, my dear Sir, let us sit on this bench. I have a good deal to say to you.

[*He takes out of his pocket a bundle of papers tied with red tape.*]

PICKWICK.

What papers are those?

PERKER.

[*Undoing the knot with his teeth.*]
The papers in Bardell and Pickwick.
[MR. PICKWICK *looks sternly at his legal friend.*]
You don't like to hear the name of the cause?

PICKWICK.

No, I do not, indeed.

PERKER.

Sorry for that, because it will form the subject of our conversation.

PICKWICK.

The iniquity of that woman and the injustice of the verdict have hardened my heart, Perker. I shall *never* pay the money, never, never! . . . Well, well, say what you have to say; it's the old story, I suppose.

PERKER.

With a difference, my dear Sir, with a difference. Mrs. Bardell, the plaintive in the action, is within these walls, Sir.

PICKWICK.

I have seen her.

PERKER.

Very good. Well now, my dear Sir, the first question I have to ask you is whether this woman is to remain here.

PICKWICK.

To remain here? How can you *ask* me? It rests with Dodson and Fogg; you know that very well.

PERKER.

I know nothing of the kind. It rests solely, wholly, and entirely with you.

PICKWICK.

[*Nervously.*]
With me!

PERKER.

[*Giving a double knock on the lid of his snuff-box, opening it, taking a great pinch, and shutting it again.*]

With you. I say that nobody but you can rescue this woman from this den of wretchedness, and that you can only do that by paying the costs of this suit,—both of plaintive and defendant—into the hands of these Freeman's Court sharks. I have received a voluntary statement from Mrs. Bardell in the form of a letter to me, that this business was, from the very first fomented and encouraged and brought

about by these men, Dodson and Fogg; that she deeply regrets ever having been the instrument of annoyance or injury to you; and that she entreats me to intercede with you and implore your pardon.

PICKWICK.

[*Sternly.*]

Is this all you have to say to me?

PERKER.

Not quite, I . . .

[*Enter* SAM *from right with a very cheerful grin.*]

PICKWICK.

[*Overjoyed at seeing his humble friend again.*]

Sam, my good lad! I had no intention of hurting your feelings, my faithful soul, by what I said. Let me explain my meaning a little more at length.

[*He goes to* SAM *quickly and puts his hands on his arms.*]

SAM.

Won't presently do, Sir?

PICKWICK.

Certainly—why not now?

SAM.

Well, Sir, the fact is, praps I'd better see arter my bed afore I does anythin' else.

PICKWICK.

[*Astonished.*]

Your bed?

SAM.

[*With great triumph.*]

Yes, my bed, Sir. I'm a pris'ner, I am. I was arrested the second I put my nose in the street for debt.

[*He gives a wink at* PERKER.]

PICKWICK.

[*Sinking back on the bench.*]

You,—*You*,—arrested for debt!

SAM.

Yes, for debt, Sir. And the man as puts me in 'ull never let me out till you goes yourself.

PICKWICK.

Bless my heart and soul! What do you mean?

SAM.

What I say, Sir. If it's forty year to come I shall be a pris'ner and I'm wery glad on it; and if

it had been Newgate it would 'ave been just the same. Now the murder's out, and damme, there's an end on it!

PICKWICK.

[*Deeply touched.*]
You've made yourself a prisoner for me, Sam.

SAM.

[*Rubbing his hands together in high glee.*]
A prisoner, gen'l'men. Con-fined, as the lady said.

PERKER.

[*Highly pleased at this unexpected step in aiding his argument.*]
There! You see, Sir. Another one here in the Fleet because you refuse to pay.

PICKWICK.

Perker, I refuse to weaken. I utterly refuse.

SAM.

And now, Sir, there's a lady just outside, as says she's somethin' wery partickler to disclose.

PICKWICK.

I can't see any lady . . . Who is it?

SAM.

Will you see her, Sir?

PICKWICK.

Oh, I suppose I must.

SAM.

Well then, all in to begin. Sound the gong, draw up the curtain, and henter the two conspiraytors.

[*Sam makes a motion and* ARABELLA *and* WINKLE *enter followed by* MARY.]

PICKWICK.

Miss Arabella Allen.

WINKLE.

No. Pardon, my dear friend, pardon, Mrs. Nathaniel Winkle.

PICKWICK.

God bless my soul.

ARABELLA.

[*In a low voice.*]

Oh, Mr. Pickwick! Can you forgive my imprudence?

[MR. PICKWICK *offers no immediate verbal response; but takes off his spectacles in great haste, and seizing both the young lady's hands in his, kisses her a great number of times; and then still retaining one of her hands he slaps* WINKLE *on the back with the other while* SAM *steals a right vigorous embrace from* MARY.]

PICKWICK.

[*To* WINKLE.]

You audacious young dog! . . . Now, my dear girl, how have all this come about. Come! Sit down and let me hear it all. How long have you been married, eh?

ARABELLA.

[*Bashfully.*]

Only three days, Sir.

WINKLE.

[*Beaming.*]

The fact is, that I could not persuade Bella to run away for a long time. And when I had persuaded her it was a long time more before we could find an opportunity.

PICKWICK.

Upon my word! You seem to have been very systematic in your proceedings. And is your brother acquainted with all this, my dear?

ARABELLA.

Oh no, no, Mr. Pickwick! That's the point, Sir. He must only know it from *you*,—from *your* lips alone. He is so violent, so prejudiced, that I fear the consequences dreadfully.

PICKWICK.

[*Sadly.*]

You forget, my love, that I am a prisoner.

ARABELLA.

No indeed I do not, my dear Sir. But I hoped that what no consideration for yourself would induce you to do, a regard to our happiness might. My brother is my only relation in the world and unless you plead for me I fear I have lost even him. I have done wrong, very, very, wrong, I know.

[*Here poor* ARABELLA *hides her face in her handkerchief and weeps bitterly.* MR. PICKWICK *becomes particularly restless as is evinced by sundry nervous rubbings of his spectacle glasses, nose, tights, head and gaiters; and then unable to stand her tears any longer he catches* ARABELLA *in his arms.*]

PICKWICK.

There, there, my dear, I didn't know how it was; but I've always been very fond of you from the first and I could never find it in my heart to stand in the way of young people's happiness.

ARABELLA.

Then you will plead with him, dear Mr. Pickwick?

PICKWICK.

[*Looking at* SAM *and then at* ARABELLA *and turning his back on* PERKER, *throwing up his arms.*]

You may do with me as you please, my dear.

PERKER.

[*Delighted.*]

Ah.

ARABELLA.

You darling!

[*She kisses* MR. PICKWICK *squarely on his nose. At the same moment* SAM *plants a resounding smack on* MARY'S *cheek, takes her in his arms and jumps her up and down.* PERKER *and* WINKLE *beam at each other.*]

WARDLE.

[*Bursting in from corridor at right.*]

Pickwick! Pickwick, my boy! Your hand! Why have I never heard until the day before yesterday that you're suffering yourself to be cooped up in jail? I'll not lose sight of you again in a hurry.

PICKWICK.

[*Much touched.*]

My very dear friend.

WARDLE.

[*To* ARABELLA.]

And what's this, I hear Arabella,—you black-eyed little jilt! I had a great idea of marrying you myself one of these odd days! Here are pretty goings on,—never were such times, eh, Pickwick, my boy?

PICKWICK.

What do you mean?

WARDLE.

Mean! Why, I think the gals are all running mad. The long and the short of it is that my gal Emily and your young friend Snodgrass have been in constant correspondence and communication ever since last Christmas, and she had very dutifully made up her mind to run away with him in laudable imitation of her old school fellow here; but having some compunctions of conscience on the subject they both thought it better, in the first instance, to pay me the compliment of asking whether I would have any objection to their being married in the usual matter of fact manner.

[*He roars with laughter.*]

PICKWICK.

Married! . . . Cupid's darts!

WARDLE.

There now, Pickwick, old boy, if you can let me hear what *you* think we ought to do I shall feel rather obliged to you.

PICKWICK.

Since last Christmas!

WARDLE.

Since last Christmas. What's to be done, eh?

PICKWICK.

[*Looking at* PERKER, *at* WINKLE, *at* ARABELLA *and all about him.*]

Well, Sir, as you know, the happiness of young people has ever been the chief pleasure of my life. So, my dear friend, if you really want to know what I think should be done, I would humbly suggest that you should invite us all to the Manor Farm, Dingley Dell, to the wedding of Miss Emily Wardle and Mr. Augustus Snodgrass. . . . Perker, pay that money,—pay that money! Never mind injustice, God's will be done.

[ARABELLA *bends and kisses* MR. PICKWICK'S *left hand while* WINKLE *puts his arm round his shoulder and* WARDLE *smacks him on the back.* PERKER *rushes forward and seizes his right hand wringing it heartily.*]

LIGHTS BLACK OUT.

Act III.

Scene 4.

[As the lights go up one sees the backcloth representing the outside of Manor Farm as used in front of Scene 3, Act II. The theatre orchestra breaks into the wedding march as the church bells in the distance clash out the marriage peal. Several little girls enter with baskets of flowers, all in their Sunday best. They are followed by a number of villagers, old and young, as the bells grow louder and louder and the Wedding March increases in volume. As they pass across the stage from right to left there is another blackout, the dropcloth is drawn up and the lights go on again to disclose the parlour of Manor Farm decorated with numerous flowers.

The door is open at the back, disclosing a path leading up to the house through a lane of hollyhocks. In the glow of sunlight one sees the wedding procession approach,—the bride, Emily, *lead by* Mr. Pickwick, *with* Snodgrass *following with old* Mrs. Wardle, Wardle *with* Rachel, Tupman, Winkle, Isabella, Arabella, Trundle, Sam *and* Mary. *There are shrill "Hoorays" from the village youngsters.*

The bells clash their loudest as the procession winds its way along the path and enters the house. The butler and the two maids are standing at a table right centre upon which there is a huge bowl of punch,

bottles of champagne and port wine and a great collection of glasses. In the middle, in the place of honour, stands the frosted wedding cake.

The music in the orchestra dies away as the party surrounds the table, but the bells crash out as the glasses, which have been filled by the servants, are taken by everyone. The sound of bells is blown in another direction by the breeze as MR. PICKWICK, *below table centre, raises his glass.*]

PICKWICK.

My good Wardle, and all my dear, dear friends, here, in Dingley Dell again, I ask you to drink to the lifelong happiness, with every blessing, of the little bride and her lucky and blushing husband.

ALL.

[*Except* EMILY *and* SNODGRASS *who gaze at each other.*]

Emily, Emily,—Snodgrass, Snodgrass!

[*The bells crack and fade.*]

WARDLE.

[*In a loud and cheerful voice.*]

And before we go in and eat a hearty breakfast or cut the wedding cake *I* have a toast to propose. Raise your glasses to the happy release of one who has won our hearts and whose return to his loving friends puts a red mark on this day. Mr. Pickwick!

ALL.

Mr. Pickwick! Mr. Pickwick!

[*Again the bells.* EMILY *touches* MR. PICKWICK'S *glass with hers and before he drinks he gives her an affectionate kiss. The bells fade but are heard faintly.*]

WARDLE.

[*Turning to* PICKWICK.]

Speech. Speech.

ALL.

Speech. Speech.

PICKWICK.

You almost make me feel that *I* am being married.

[*There is a general laugh.*]

Dear friends, I thank you. This is one of those moments of unmixed happiness, of which, if we seek them, there are ever some to cheer our transitory existence here. There are dark shadows on the earth, but its lights are stronger in the contrast. As I have told my dear friend Wardle, the house in which I am going to settle down is in one of the most pleasant spots near London. It has been fitted up with every attention to substantial comfort, perhaps to a little elegance besides,—but of that you shall judge for yourselves. Sam accompanies me there,—my faithful Sam. I have engaged, on

Perker's representation, a housekeeper,—a very old one,—and such other servants as she thinks I shall require. It will warm my heart to witness the happiness of those who are dearest to me beneath my own roof. I have communicated with the Club acquainting them with my intention of resigning.

TUPMAN, SNODGRASS AND WINKLE.

No. No.

PICKWICK.

Yes. Yes! During my long absence it has suffered much from internal dissensions and the withdrawal of my name, coupled with this and other circumstances, has occasioned its dissolution.

[*His voice breaks badly.*]

The Pickwick Club exists no longer. . . . I shall never regret,—I shall never regret having devoted these many months to mixing with different varieties and shades of human character, frivolous as my pursuit of novelty may have appeared to many. Nearly the whole of my previous life having been devoted to business, and the pursuit of wealth, numerous scenes of which I had no previous conception have dawned upon me,—I hope to the enlargement of my mind, and the improvement of my understanding. If I have done but little good, I trust I have done less harm, and that none of my adventures will be other than a source of

amusing and pleasant recollection to me in the decline of life. . . . God bless you all.

[WARDLE *commences to sing "Auld Lang Syne" and all the party, joining in and crossing hands, form a circle round the table. The theatre orchestra bursts into "Auld Lang Syne" fortissimo as the church bells clang and clang and clang above and through the music.*]

CURTAIN.

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